

TOP STORY: THE COSSACKS ARE COMING! THE COSSACKS ARE COMING!

May 16 - 29, 1994

# In THESE TIMES

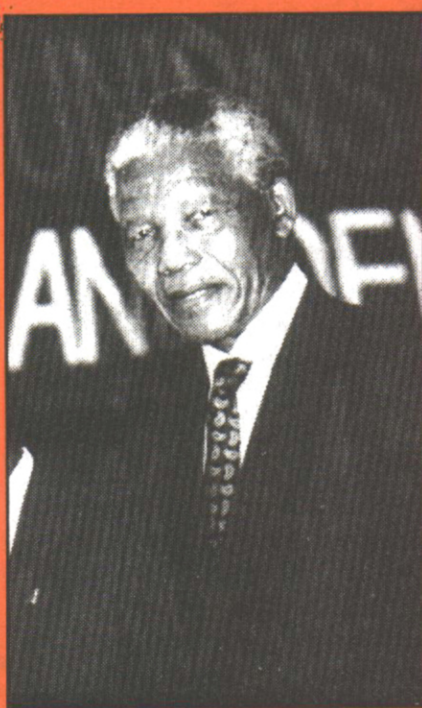
the alternative newsmagazine

## MANDELA'S CHALLENGE

The sobering  
realities of  
apartheid's  
legacy

WILLIAM MINTER

PAGE 14



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# E D I T O R I A L

## CALIFORNIA LEADS HEALTH CARE FIGHT

A Canadian-style health care plan may not seem realistic to Washington insiders and liberal pragmatists, but 1,064,000 Californians who signed petitions to put a single-payer initiative on the state's November ballot see it differently. Californians for Health Security (CHS), a coalition of labor, church and medical groups that fielded some 10,000 volunteers, filed the petitions in every county in the state on April 26. With only 677,000 valid signatures required, the ballot initiative is off to a remarkable start.

If approved by the voters on November 8, the initiative would eliminate private insurance companies from California's health care field and substitute public funding for insurance premiums. In place of the insurance company bureaucracies and their endless efforts to limit or disallow claims, the single-payer plan would permit consumers to freely choose their own doctors, hospitals or HMOs. The providers would then bill the state, thereby eliminating questions about coverage and the complex paperwork involved in verifying and validating insurance claims. Individuals and businesses now insured would pay taxes about equal to what they now pay in premiums, but coverage would be universal.

But getting on the ballot and winning a majority in November are two very different things. CHS campaign chairman Glen Schneider told *In These Times* that he expects the insurance industry to spend \$100 million in an attempt to defeat the initiative (an amount that policy holders will end up paying). (See story on page 12.) And he anticipates that CHS will have to raise \$4 million to provide its own minimal TV campaign. The fate of the initiative in November, therefore, will rest in the hands of volunteers

canvassing the state.

A victory for single-payer in California in November would change the map of health care reform. We therefore urge you to help CHS in any way you can. Write CHS at 1144 65th St., Oakland, CA., 94609, or call (510) 653-6492.

## HAITI PRESSURE GETS CLINTON'S ATTENTION

Protests from the Congressional Black Caucus and a handful of senators, as well as critical media exposure, have led President Clinton to change his rhetoric about restoring democracy in Haiti. But while Clinton's new talk about military intervention to restore President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to office is welcome, White House actions fall far short of what is needed.

Asked about TransAfrica Forum leader Randall Robinson's hunger strike protesting the administration's Haitian policy, Clinton said that Robinson was doing the right thing. "We ought to change our policy," he said, and Robinson "ought to stay out there."

This did not please Robinson. To "suggest that the policy should change and I should stay out there on a hunger strike while he abdicates his responsibility is deeply disturbing," Clinton, who "appears to be without a moral compass," could "institute a new policy on refugees and the Haitian military with the stroke of a pen," Robinson said.

*Aroused citizens  
outside the  
Washington Beltway  
can challenge  
administration  
policy at home  
and abroad.*

On the plus side, Clinton fired special envoy Lawrence Pezzulo, a friend of Haiti's ruling class and part of the anti-Aristide cabal. The administration has also asked the U.N. Security Council to approve a resolution that would ban non-commercial flights to Haiti, ask nations to freeze bank accounts of Haitian military leaders and close loopholes that now allow American-owned firms to continue manufacturing in Haiti. And Clinton is now talking about military intervention in the

inevitable event that these somewhat tougher sanctions fail.

On the negative side, Clinton has withheld pressure on the Dominican Republic to stop the flow of gasoline and oil over its border with Haiti in violation of the current U.N. embargo, and he has not stopped U.S. airlines from continuing commercial flights, or taken other measures that would make his threat of military force credible. It is still possible to make administration policy conform to its rhetoric about defending Haitian democracy. But it will only happen if public pressure escalates, both on Clinton and on members of Congress. ◀

## IN THESE TIMES

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# LETTERS

## Appreciatively unquiet

I'd like to congratulate you for your honest, insightful coverage of what's happening in Mexico. "Things Fall Apart" and "Around and Around" by Ilan Stavans (*ITT*, April 18) made me understand the current president and the near future better than anything I regularly get in the news. Mexico is living through a fragile period, and we need to understand what's going on. I have been following Stavans' writing in *In These Times* for some time and think he is one of the great assets of the magazine. His opinions leave me unquiet. Thanks.

Elizabeth Contreras  
Hadley, Mass.

## Self-sniffing

Joel Bleifuss made a good point concerning the "Whitewater events" (*ITT*, April 4).

But Bleifuss did not go far enough.

He didn't criticize William Safire of the *New York Times*, who took the lead in the Whitewater matter, "smelling a rat" way back in July 1993. Nor did Bleifuss mention Robert Bartley, editorialist for the *Wall Street Journal*, who also refused to let go of the story.

Unfortunately, most of the two dozen leading pundits in the United States think Safire is No. 1. According to Eric Alterman in his book *Sound and Fury*, before he served at the *New York Times* Safire worked for Richard Nixon to cover up the Watergate burglary. So why did Washington insiders unquestioningly accept his word on "Whitewater" and his reasons for Bobby Inman's withdrawal from the Washington press scene? If Safire is really interested in the savings and loan scandal, he could read some books and give the public the highlights about the national crisis and not just repeat charges that concern only Little Rock banks.

Robert H. Whealey  
Ohio University  
Athens, Ohio

## Practicality

I was disappointed to read John Judis' analysis of the current health care debate in Washington and his endorsement of the Clinton plan (*ITT*, March 21). As a new subscriber, I naively thought *ITT* promoted public policy that served the long-term interests of our citizenry.

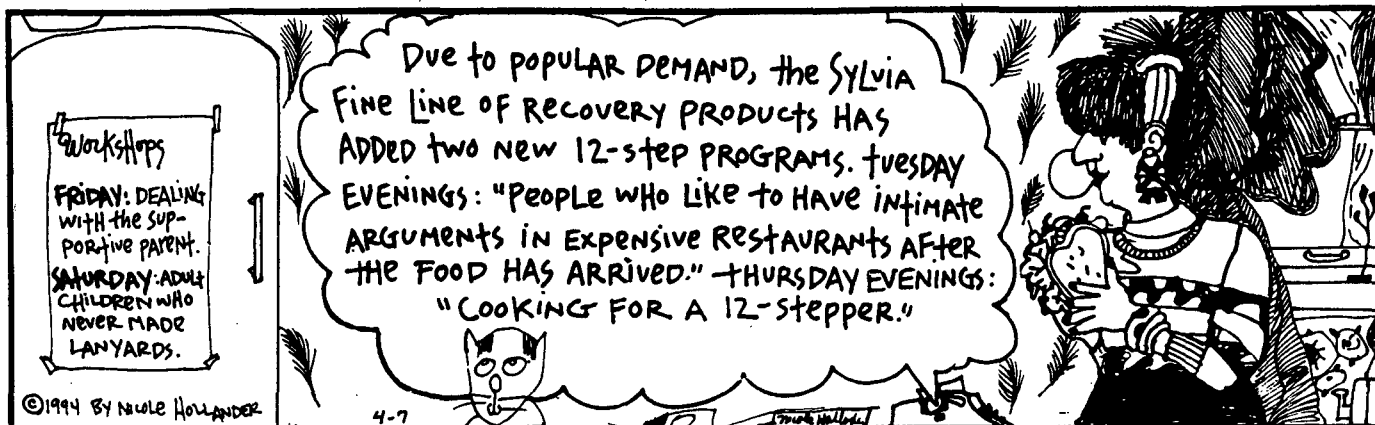
The single-payer health care model offers universal coverage, simplicity and the opportunities to root out waste and contain costs. Since when does a left analysis promote *poor* public policy because it's "do-able"?

The main factor diminishing the prospects of serious reform—that is, single-payer reform—is the hundreds of millions of dollars being spent by the insurance companies and the traditional health care establishment. It does absolutely no good for progressives to shrink away from this flood of lobbying dollars and bow to expediency. Let the moderates spout the "policies of the practical." It's the role of progressives to educate and mobilize as broadly as possible on the issues, forcing the "pols" to pay attention to the "public," not the big money. (Ninety-one congressional representatives have signed on to the single-payer bill. It's not utopia!)

Here in Vermont, a state of 550,000 with a part-time legislature, single-payer advocates had more than 40 percent support in the House but fell victim to a two-month, \$1 million lobbying blitz that manipulated the media, panicked

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander





the business community and buckled the resolve of many supporters.

The issue of health care will not go away. Our society cannot sustain the economic or human costs of a system that compromises access and hides waste in the name of the "free market." Progressives accomplish little by signing on to plans that preserve the most egregious elements of fraud and waste simply because they can be enacted.

**Tom O. Smith**  
Progressive/Independent  
State Representative  
Montpelier, Vt.

*Editor's note:* In These Times writers are free to express their views whether or not they coincide with the editorial position of the magazine. John Judis' opinion about health care is just that—his opinion. As it happens, it is not ours, as we have made clear in several editorials.

## Failure of nerve

Harvard medical economist Rashi Fein gives a good answer to John Judis' contention that we must support Clinton's health plan because single payer has no chance in Congress.

Fein, writing in *American Prospect* (spring 1994), says one alternative is to add a Medicare Part C option to the mix of health plans from which individuals can choose. This option could enroll people in states that elect not to enter the program—"a far more realistic fall-back option than the Clinton plan to put recalcitrant states into 'receivership' and have the federal government develop plans for them."

This would stimulate the "gradual development" of an infrastructure for a single-payer financing mechanism, says Fein, and permit public insurance to compete with private insurance. Medicare's performance: 2.1 percent overhead; private insurance: 23 percent overhead.

These options would permit a

"gradual evolution" toward a tax-based non-employment related system. I commend Fein's approach to Judis, who seems to have lost his nerve.

**Gregory Bergman**  
Berkeley, Calif.

## Delusions

To pretend that the problems of Latin America can be solved by "a peaceful transition to ... a democratic vision of socialism where human injustice is reduced through government programs" is to be naive or disingenuous. Both Jorge Castañeda, in *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left After the Cold War*, and Ilan Stavans, in his review of the book (ITT, March 21), blame left radical movements for the results of intransigent imperialistic policies that have perpetuated poverty, illiteracy, lack of opportunity and uneven distribution of wealth in Latin America.

If countries south of the Rio Grande elected governments that would tax the wealthy, demand that corporations behave responsibly, expand social services and education, and implement some measure of agrarian reform, how long would those governments be allowed to stay in power? The military, with the full approval of the wealthy, corporate interests and the U.S. government, would quickly overthrow them. Remember Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala, the Rómulos, Betancourt and Gallegos, in Venezuela, Salvador Allende in Chile? Or Haiti's Jean-Bertrand Aristide right now?

Radical movements appear because liberal gradualism has been made impossible by the power elites. Nothing will change until the hemispheric policy of the United States becomes more accepting of progressive social and economic reforms, even at the cost of affecting the excessive profits derived from exploitation.

NAFTA does exactly the opposite. Cuba and Nicaragua can no longer

be blamed for instigating rebellions, but Chiapas happened anyway. And uprisings will continue to occur throughout Latin America because when conditions are desperate people take desperate measures. Let's not delude ourselves. We must recognize reality and either do something about it or continue to face the consequences.

**Ada Bello**  
Philadelphia

## Landmines

This is in response to the article about Ken Rutherford losing his leg to a landmine in Somalia (ITT, April 18). This courageous young man, dedicated to helping ease the pain in the developing world, met a fate not unlike many of the poor in Third World countries. I'm not sure we can merely call these happenings "accidents," as your article stated.

Ongoing annual casualties total about 8,000, mainly civilians. Handicap International estimates that there have been more than 1 million mine casualties in the past 15 years. (See ITT, Sept. 6.) The United States continues to produce the largest number of landmine models (some 37). And by Washington's estimate, 15 percent of the mines—12.8 million plaguing the world today—originated in the United States.

Human Rights Watch is currently working for an international ban on landmines. These horrendous, vicious weapons recognize no ceasefire and, as in the case of Ken Rutherford, maim innocent victims.

Perhaps the best work Ken could involve himself in today would be to help in the current campaign to end the use of landmines, and to help garner funds for the de-mining of the killing fields.

**Elsie Speck**  
Carbondale, Ill.

# InSHORT



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## CONTRACT BLUES

**T**eamster freight workers are likely to ratify their new national contract this month—but they aren't all happy about it. Despite major victories in the three-week strike of 70,000 truckers and dock workers, the union fell short on critical goals that it had set for itself.

This was the first freight strike since the industry was deregulated in 1980, ushering in a period of intense competition in which small non-union firms proliferated, established firms went bankrupt and Teamster dominance waned. The strike was provoked by hard-line employer demands for concessions, including widespread use of low-wage part-time workers.

"Employers always ask for concessions," said Tom Griffith, a



By Woody Igou

## Syndrome Syndrome

As part of a continuing assault on the notion of free will being waged in U.S. criminal courts, the most recent



"defense" is called the "urban survival syndrome." In a

Texas, case, a

black teenager who killed two young blacks was diagnosed as suffering from this problem, which makes young urban blacks terribly fearful of being hurt by others. This is followed by an irresistible urge for violence. The trial ended in a hung jury.

How about the "John Cheever Syndrome" for those in suburbia. ("I didn't mean to swim in your pool—it was the martinis and the ennui.")

## Topping Timothy Leary

Harvard psychiatry professor Dr. John Mack, a Pulitzer Prize winner, has moved away from Freud's couch and into outer



space. In his new book, *Abduction*, he has claimed that his patients

have been abducted and sexually abused by space aliens. These include "Ed," whose

sperm was taken by an alien woman in high school; "Jerry," who gave birth to a human-alien hybrid; and "Peter," who has an "alien wife" in a "parallel universe." *Next book: Ghost Money, How Grants Disappear into Thin Air.*

## Fetching boneheads

In a new low, even for daytime talk shows, ABC's *Mike & Matty* interviewed pet psychic Emilia Kincaid. (Pets "speak



her in human-sounding voices.") Kincaid described the "voice" of a volunteer pet as a

combination between Marilyn Monroe and Joan Crawford. She also asserted that German shepherds "speak in a German accent" while Irish setters, of course, utilize a lilting brogue. *Run, don't walk, to the couch of Dr. Mack.*

## Bonus onus

Disney CEO Michael Eisner reported stock option bonuses last year totaling in excess



of \$200 million. This occurred in the same year that his "Euro-Disney" idea floundered and

was only saved because of captive bank restructuring and French government intervention.

*Look for his salary to top \$1 billion when "Albanian Disney World" opens.*

## APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Vapid Cultural Zephyrs
2. E Channel Stupid
3. Unauthorized Biography Zone
4. Republican Convention Rerun
5. Bob Dole Spleenic
6. Mega-Dittos from Hell
7. NRA Heart and Brains
8. Pyongyang on my mind
9. Disavowed by Bosnian Serbs
10. Hurry, Melt the Polar Cap!

Pennsylvania local president and bargaining committee member who was critical of the settlement, "but I've never seen the magnitude of those demands in the master freight agreement before. I think the companies were taking advantage of the situation."

The union embarked upon the strike facing financial pressures and with its president, Ron Carey, under attack by the union old guard. After depleting its strike fund, the union was forced to borrow \$15 million to pay strike benefits. Members had earlier rejected a dues increase, which the old guard had also strongly opposed. Earlier this year many Carey opponents refused to participate in a safety strike against UPS, and during the freight strike several old-guard leaders publicly questioned the wisdom of striking.

All this may have encouraged the intransigence of the companies, which sent letters to strikers that echoed old-guard criticisms of the Carey team and alluded to the existence of more reasonable leaders within the union.

Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), the pro-Carey reform group, described the contract as a victory. Without a strike, or with the previous leaders in power, TDU organizer Ken Paff argued, there would have been far greater concessions. But TDU did not hide its dislike for parts of the compromise. Paff described the agreement as a "truce line" in a war.

Some militants wanted to carry on the fight. "I told the members: 'No way the contract would be less than what we had before,'" said international union vice-president Sam Theodus, a bargaining committee member critical of the contract. "It's just the fact that we had such a firm line against concessions and then we did exactly what we said we wouldn't do. But when you're on strike, things change. The question becomes, 'What do you do to get them back?'"

Old-guard leaders attacked Carey from both his left and right flanks. They inaccurately portrayed the contract as the most concessionary ever signed, yet also argued that Carey never should have called a strike—though none of them dissented at the meeting that unanimously approved the strike. They also acknowledged that they probably would have made concessions.

"Carey must have known he would have to come up with some concessions to deal with the flexibilities the companies were demanding," said Chip Roth, assistant to Local 391 President R.V. Durham, one of Carey's opponents in the 1991 election. "What's smart to do in that situation is to stay at the table, keep the members working, then limit the concessions you're going to make. ... The threat of a strike is sometimes more effective than a strike itself." Roth accused Carey of polarizing negotiations, making it "more difficult for the company to come with a more reasonable final offer." He argued that calling the strike raised the expectations of union members, who were then demoralized when the contract contained concessions. "No one denies that there may have been a need to grant some flexibility," he said, "but by calling a strike you make matters worse."

While the union beat back demands for part-time workers with no benefits and with wages at \$9 an hour, there will probably be a slight increase in the use of already established "casual" workers. Combined pay and benefits for regular workers will rise about 80 cents per hour each year of the contract, roughly the same as the last contract.

The union did agree to permit the companies to nearly triple their use of rail—with the "piggyback" trailers—but negotiated job security for all affected workers. While this is hard for truckers to accept, shifting more freight to

railroads is socially and environmentally desirable. Unionized rail workers gain and the unionized trucking companies can better compete with non-union firms, but under this contract current Teamster workers also should have job security. Although the union defeated other provisions to divert work to non-union carriers, it did not succeed on one of its key early goals—making it easier to organize the non-union subsidiaries of the big carriers.

The union reformed the grievance procedure and guaranteed that workers would be considered innocent until proven guilty of disciplinary violations, but it surrendered the right to strike over deadlocked grievances. Although the Teamsters had never, to anyone's recollection, exercised that right, it was important both as a principle and as a threat to employers.

Carey argued that the union's victories in this contract could provide incentives for non-union truckers to join the Teamsters. But Teamster organizing director Robert Muehlenkamp acknowledges that freight organizing has proven especially hard. Labor law is stacked against organizers and the companies are "violently opposed, well-organized and experienced in fighting." Many non-union truckers are also former Teamsters who feel bitter about how their union failed to protect them.

Carey may have fended off the worst in this round of negotiations. But without new organizing—and profound changes in labor law—the Teamster trucker's tenuous hold on a middle-class lifestyle will be ever more in peril.

—David Moberg

## NATIONAL WRITERS UNION, ITT REACH SETTLEMENT

**I**n *These Times* and the National Writers Union (NWU) have jointly announced the establishment of a \$75,000 fund to settle ITT's back debts to freelance writers, as part of a broad contract and grievance settlement. Under the agreement, ITT writers who believe they are owed money are given until July 8 to submit formal payment claims.

The agreement also made ITT the first Chicago-area publication to formally accept the NWU's "standard journalism contract." Officials for the union and magazine said their agreement was designed to provide the strongest available protections for writers' rights while helping the magazine recover from years of financial problems during which debts to writers mounted.

NWU President Jonathan Tasini called the \$75,000 settlement "another victory for the union's grievance process, which has helped writers collect more than \$800,000 in fees over the past 11 years—and for our campaign to make the NWU's standard journalism contract the standard throughout magazine publishing." He said the agreement will "add ITT to the still-small list of periodicals providing writers a contract that fully protects their rights." He applauded the effort by ITT and its donors to "find the money needed to put past disputes behind us and re-establish a close relationship between unionized writers and a magazine known for its strong support of the labor movement."

ITT Publisher James Weinstein said the the refinance was made possible by the generosity of the magazine's readers. Their \$340,000 in gifts and loans in a recent refinance drive brought ITT back from the brink of bankruptcy, he said.

## MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

### Drug company programming

If you suddenly find yourself worrying about obsessive compulsive disorder, it might be due to corporate hype. The Upjohn drug company, working with Belgium's Solvay company, has just come up with a drug targeted to treat the disorder. To expand the market, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, the companies are launching a major public relations campaign, complete with public service messages, posters, calendars, videos and commissioned studies released to the media. The companies are apparently still searching for a "celebrity sufferer." Howard Stern, who claims to be cured of the disorder, has been rejected. According to Upjohn's public relations director, he's not "someone the general public can invite to their house." Watch for the made-for-TV movie, and feel free to ask whether public health priorities should be set by drug companies and their PR henchmen.

### At last

Ever since the Children's Television Act was passed in 1990, children's advocates have been waiting for broadcasters to fulfill the letter and spirit of the law. And waiting, and waiting. Broadcasters were required to air educational and informational children's programming and to limit commercials on kids' shows. But many have programmed educational shows at times when kids aren't watching, and some have continued to overstuff shows with ads.



Now the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is finally opening a hearing on kids' TV, at which activists plan to expose shoddy industry practices. In addition to the June 28 hearing, the FCC has just sent another get-serious signal. Five Texas TV stations got fines totaling \$65,000 for running too many ads on kids' shows, bringing the number of stations fined to 18.

### Viewers like them

Public television is looking better and better to advertisers who want upscale demographics and what the business calls an "uncluttered environment"—that is, with few ads. WNET in New York is doing well with program sponsorship from BMW, Mitsubishi and Acura dealerships; Bell Atlantic and American Express are big-ticket PBS underwriters. Corporate generosity usually goes to status-quo programming, such as *Great Performances* or the *MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour*. The catch: viewer and tax dollars, which might support offbeat or controversial programming, are harder to get when people perceive the service as corporate-supported. Meanwhile, PBS has won the Center for Science in the Public Interest's (CSPI) Harlan Page Hubbard Lemon Award, a dubious honor that commemorates misleading and harmful advertisements. (Hubbard was a huckster of useless patent medicines.) CSPI targeted PBS for running underwriter credits that were almost the same—and in at least one case exactly the same—as ads run on commercial stations.

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Writers and photographers who believe the magazine owes them money are to submit claims to: In These Times Settlement Account, c/o National Writers Union, 873 Broadway, New York, NY 10003. Claimants must provide a written statement including publication dates, titles and lengths of stories for which they are owed money. If claims for payment received by July 8 exceed the amount in the settlement fund, the money will be divided among all valid claimants on an equal-percentage basis.

## DISPLAY CASE

On April 29, the Clinton administration ushered in a new era in cooperation between government and business. It announced that the Pentagon would spend \$580 million to develop a flat-panel display industry in the United States. Flat panels are the screens used in laptop computers, digital watches and calculators, and the instrument panels of airplanes.

Like most other advanced technology, flat-panel displays were first developed in the United States—by RCA in 1965—but the technology was leased to Japanese firms who developed the means to manufacture screens. By the time American firms realized that flat panels would be useful not merely on watches but on laptops and instrument panels, the Japanese had captured 97 percent of the \$8 billion industry.

The Bush administration was reluctant to subsidize particular industries, but the Clinton administration heeded pressure from the industry and from the Pentagon. The administration plan is a sharp departure from past government practice. In the past, the government, acting through the Pentagon, limited itself to funding technologies whose principal use would be military. Now the government is funding a technology whose primary use will be civilian, but which can be adapted for military use.

—John B. Judis

### ROUGH CUTS

By JA Reid



By Miles Harvey



## A DOER NOT A TALKER

*Bongki Njobe is courted  
by the ANC*

Few party loyalists refuse a request by African National Congress (ANC) head Nelson Mandela, but Bongki Njobe recently had the temerity to do so. When Njobe, at age 32, stepped down in March from a select list of ANC members to be appointed to the new South African parliament, Mandela personally requested to see her, to try to persuade her to run for office. She declined.

"I wouldn't have the patience to sit around Parliament and talk all day. I'd rather do things than talk

about doing things," says Njobe of her decision. "At my age, I can afford not to be in politics and still have an impact."

Instead, she is consumed with finishing her doctoral studies at the University of Pretoria, focusing on women and land reform. Njobe is one of the first black women on the faculty of that elite, conservative and historically all-white university. She is one of a handful of black women in South Africa with a higher degree in the hard sciences—in her case, agriculture and genetics.

Njobe is passionately committed to her research, believing that South Africa's future hinges on how successfully land reform in rural areas is implemented. "At the heart of it, black liberation is about the land issue," she says. "But unfortunately, in the ANC there is a strong urban bias in policy and politics. The rural areas are not well represented."

Despite having served on the ANC's land reform commission, she criticizes some of the vague criteria regarding land reform in the recently released economic blueprint, the Reconstruction and Development Program. "It does not guarantee that women will have total control over decision-making regarding their future," she asserts.

Njobe has lobbied the ANC to develop criteria for land redistribution that will help women. She suggests that the future Land Claims Court, which will be established within 60 days of the new government's inauguration, should consider a person's history of victimization and deprivation.

Rural women in South Africa are at the bottom of society. Nearly 2 million households are headed by women, who are often poor and illiterate. Njobe believes that, in addition to women receiving title to land, they must be educated to work it productively. Njobe has started a school to help train blacks

## Tale of the tape

It simply could not have been a coincidence that the national Day of Mourning for Richard Nixon fell on April 27—Professional Secretaries Day. Some prankster—whether in the White House or in the heavens—was having one last laugh at poor Richard's expense.

It was a professional secretary, after all, who played a central, if unwilling, role in Nixon's undoing. That secretary was Rose Mary Woods, "whose name will forever be associated with the famous 18 and one-half-minute gap in a crucial Watergate tape," according to a *Chicago Sun-Times* report about those in attendance at Nixon's funeral.

You remember The Gap. It came in a key audiotape that the White House had agreed to turn over to Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski in 1973. The tape in question was of a meeting between the president and aides John Ehrlichman and Bob Haldeman on June 20, 1972, just three days after the Watergate break-in. It was expected to reveal whether the president was part of the Watergate cover-up.

The missing minutes were suspicious from the start, as they seemed to coincide with the period in which Haldeman and Nixon discussed Watergate. But Rose Mary Woods stepped forward as the fall gal. She testified that she'd caused The Gap—or at least five minutes of it—by pressing the wrong button on her tape recorder while transcribing the tape. Woods was later described by journalist J. Anthony Lukas as "one of the last true loyalists

and probably the president's fiercest defender." In *Nightmare: The Underside of the Nixon Years*, Lukas reported that Woods had served Nixon faithfully—perhaps too faithfully—for more than two decades. "Rose would die for him," an insider explained. The tape finally proved to be doctored, but Woods stood by her man, even as her story came to a humiliating disintegration—one that marked the beginning of the end for Nixon. In her version of the incident, Woods had kept her foot pressed to an awkwardly located floor pedal for the duration of the erasure. This involved an unlikely contortion, and after Woods tried to recreate it, an embarrassing photo of the event appeared on the cover of *Newsweek* with the headline "Rose Mary's Boo-Boo."

"The depressing shocks of Watergate turned momentarily into a national laugh," wrote Watergate chronicler James Doyle. Added author Barry Sussman: "[A] prevailing joke was that a secretary could get a job at the White House if she could erase a hundred words a minute." The jokes have changed little since 1973 (one ACLU office marked the Day of Mourning by closing its doors for 18 and one-half minutes) but the fate of secretaries seems to be improving. A recent article in *The Secretary*—the official publication of the group behind Professional Secretaries Day—concluded that "[s]ecretaries should never be asked to lie for their bosses nor should they do so. ... [P]rofessional secretaries of the '90s know that they are totally responsible and accountable for their own actions."

in agriculture and farm administration. She has also managed to organize special scholarships for women to receive higher training in the field.

In South Africa, where paternalism is entrenched, Njobe is a truly liberated woman. She speaks her mind, she drinks with the guys, and she, on principle, won't serve men their dinners, as many women are still expected to do. Njobe attributes her maverick status to her parents, who were both teachers, as well as to her exile experience in Zambia.

Like many South Africans, Njobe did not return to the land of her parents until 1990, after the ANC was legalized and Nelson Mandela released. She was shocked at the behavior of South African women she met in the townships. "Young women my age were not allowed to comment on politics in social gatherings," she says. "They were just expected to stay quiet and serve."

Njobe does not believe that African women should wholeheartedly adopt the Western feminist agenda, however. "Women here must stretch themselves. But we must keep up our family linkages and relationships, that is an African tradition."

Njobe is so excited by her work that she is not keen to leap into the upper echelons of government. If, however, Mandela were to come to her with the portfolio of minister of agriculture, Njobe admits she might accept the position.

—April Oliver

## TOMORROW'S NEWS TONIGHT BY STEVE BRODNER





# THE FIRST STONE

## Money talks, democracy walks

By Joel Bleifuss

**T**o what extent are corporate interest groups able to manipulate the democratic process? The answer will be revealed in the coming year when Congress votes on health care reform.

Key congressional players in the health care debate are getting showered with big bucks from big business. People who follow the money trail predict that during the 1993-1994 election cycle more than \$50 million in special interest money could flow into congressional coffers in an effort to influence the debate.

From January 1991 to December 1993, the political action committees (PACs) associated with the five largest health insurance corporations—all of which support the Clinton plan—have alone contributed \$1.3 million to Capitol Hill lawmakers, according to *Capital Eye: A Close-Up Look at Money in Politics*, a new newsletter from the Center for Responsive Politics.

The Clinton plan builds on the existing employer-based system to provide universal coverage. It requires employers to pay most of the cost of insurance premiums. This system would mandate that insurance be purchased from state-formed health alliances that negotiate with providers to offer a choice of plans.

Under this plan, health care costs would ostensibly be controlled through competition among insurers. But what may work in theory does not hold true in practice. Margaret Engle, *Capital Eye's* editor, says that Minnesota may provide an example of what can be expected to happen under Clinton's plan. "Last year [Minnesota] passed a health care reform plan generally based on managed competition," she writes. "One of the objectives of the new law was to keep health care costs down through competition. In fact, even before the law went into effect, large insurance companies and HMOs gobbled up various parts of the health care system."

Three companies cornered two-thirds of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area health care market, and they were beginning

to expand into the rural areas of the state. Consequently, Minnesota, realizing that managed competition was not providing more competition but less, postponed implementing its plan.

Under the Clinton plan, a similar concentration of power would likely occur on the national level. Not only would large insurance companies administer health care, but they also would run the health care system. The eight largest insurance companies already control almost half of the HMOs in the United States.

Among those who stand to lose under the Clinton plan are smaller insurance companies, which would be trampled by the industry giants. They are not giving up without the best fight money can buy.

These smaller companies are organized

under the banner of the Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA), a group that has contributed \$242,000 to members of Congress from January 1991 to December 1993. That money is the tip of the iceberg.

Add that to the \$1 million the HIAA is paying to the public relations firm CMF&Z PR, which is based in Des Moines, Iowa. CMF&Z PR helped the HIAA set up the "grass-roots" group Coalition for Health Insurance Choices, a self-described organization of "thousands of businesses, individuals, consumers, farmers, seniors and insurers" that supports "the visionary proposal developed by the Health Insurance Association of America." But the coalition's "grass-roots" movement is manufactured; its activists turn out to be insurance agents. (See "The First Stone," Oct. 4, 1993.)

The HIAA proposed sending out "swat teams" of coalition members who would go undercover and speak out against the Clinton health care plan at town meetings. The group is also spending \$7 million to spread its vision across the nation, principally in the guise of the television ad that features that whiney yuppie couple, Harry and Louise.

Citizen Action, a national consumer-oriented grass-roots group, is trying to keep track of the health industry money. It has established a periodic bulletin on the health reform debate that reports which lawmakers are receiving how much from whom. The bulletin, *Unhealthy Money*, recently reported that from Jan. 1, 1993 to Jan. 31, 1994, campaign contributions from health industry PACs and donors stood at \$7.5 million, a 35 percent increase over the same period in the previous election cycle.

*Unhealthy Money* points out that powerful House Ways and Means Committee chair Dan Rostenkowski (D-IL) received more money from health insurance industry PACs and large donors than any other representative. Rostenkowski's take from this group during the period from Jan. 1, 1993 to Jan. 31, 1994 was \$71,000. And with the November elections still six months away, the peak season

for congressional giving is yet to come.

By contrast, Rostenkowski's colleague on the Ways and Means Committee, Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA), received just \$4,000 from the insurance industry. McDermott is co-sponsor (along with Democratic Sen. Paul Wellstone of Minnesota) of a Canadian-style "single payer" plan. The Wellstone-McDermott bill would establish a universal health insurance program that is guided by a national board but administered by the states. It would achieve savings by doing away with the middleman, the health insurance industry.

And the industry is willing to go to great lengths to not be done away with. Just ask Rep. Jim Cooper (D-TN). He's the principal author of a highly touted conservative alternative to the Clinton health care plan. Cooper's proposed solution does not mandate spending caps, much less caps on insurance premiums, nor does it require employers to pay for insurance. What it does do is ensure that the health care industry hydra will laugh all the way to the bank, devouring the uninsured along the way.

For his efforts to bolster the status quo, Cooper—who is running for Senate—had received, as of March 31, at least \$540,000 from the health and insurance industries, according to Citizen Action. This number is especially interesting, given that Cooper does not accept money from PACs. This gives Cooper an air of integrity, but in fact, individual donors are much harder to track than PACs. For example, a contribution from a "housewife" does not tell one much about the husband's profession or affiliations.

In the April 19 *New York Times*, Richard Berke detailed Cooper's take from a January breakfast hosted by the lobbying firm Cassidy and Associates for the pharmaceutical industry. After chowing down, 23 drug company executives coughed up \$14,500.

The one hope in this morass of special interest money is the California single-payer initiative. Neighbor to Neighbor, the San Francisco-based community action network, is trying to bypass legislators and their corporate sponsors by putting a single-payer proposition before the voters. Under the current version of the Clinton plan, states can opt out and choose their own health care systems. And if the largest state in the nation were to institute a program of universal health care coverage, other states would follow.

Ingrid Smith, Neighbor to Neighbor volunteer coordinator, says her group will use people power to counter the estimated \$100 million

that the health care and insurance industries will spend to try to defeat the single-payer initiative. The group also plans to harness the support of Hollywood stars. As independent professionals, actors and actresses are among those most vulnerable to the vagaries of the current health care system.

The Neighbor to Neighbor campaign is buoyed by the fact that in 1988, the auto insurance industry was unable to defeat Proposition 108, which sought to control auto insurance costs. The auto insurance industry spent \$70 million trying to win over the voters, but to no avail.

In Washington, Citizen Action's Ed Rothschild is elated about the prospects in California. He says: "Citizen Action has found in its canvassing around the country that single-payer has a lot of support among most types of citizens, especially when people realize that it is more efficient, that it offers more choice of doctors, and that it allows doctors to practice medicine the way they were taught to practice, and not on the basis of what is least costly for the HMO."

Single-payer could well win in California. And Congress could then negate that victory by forcing all states to adopt whatever national health care plan is eventually concocted by our elected representatives and their friends in the health and insurance industries. But that's the way this democracy works, right?

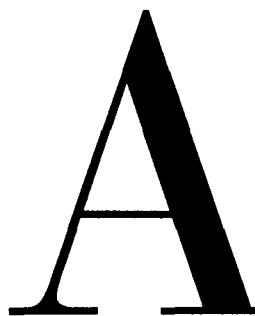
## THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



**SOUTH AFRICA**

# The morning after



s excitement settles after Nelson Mandela's election victory, the new South African president now faces formidable challenges on many fronts.

The legacy of inequality under apartheid and of deep-seated ethnic resentment are only part of the problem. Mandela must also contend with an economy plagued by weak growth, which is not just due to international sanctions against the old government but also to structural weaknesses and policy errors.

Practically everyone agrees that growth and redistribution must both be on the agenda, but there are profound disagreements about where to strike the balance and what specific policies to adopt.

South Africa has been deeply affected by worldwide economic trends, compounded by the political uncertainties that face potential investors. The country's annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate declined from almost 6 percent in the '60s

to less than 4 percent the following decade and to barely 1 percent during the '80s. And the South African economy contracted sharply during the recession-bound '90s. Per capita income has declined during each of the past 12 years. Despite its reputation as a rich country, South Africa is still overwhelmingly dependent on primary product exports, such as gold. Its manufacturing industry is largely uncompetitive on a world scale. Moreover, the educational and other deprivations to which its majority population has been submitted are an economic handicap in a world in which competitiveness is linked to capacity for technical adaptation and innovation.

That is the context in which the Mandela government must address apartheid. The statistics are shocking. About 25 percent of South Africans live in grinding poverty. At least 7 million people are homeless. Millions

of black South Africans live in shacks with no sewage system, no water and no electricity. Fifty percent of the country's population is illiterate. According to a 1989 business survey, over half of all African families live in extreme poverty, compared to 2.6 percent of whites in that income category. Sixty-one percent of infant deaths among black families are caused by malnutrition.

A recent World Bank report estimated that South African whites have a per capita income level that is 9.5 times higher than blacks, 4.5 times higher than mixed-race people and three times higher than Asians. The most recent statistics (from 1991) show South Africa as the most unequal developing country in the world among the 36 for which data is available. The poorest 40 percent of households earned 4 percent of total income, while the richest 10 percent earned more than 50 percent.

Ownership of property is even more unequal than income. Almost all the major companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) are white-owned and controlled. Five companies control over 80 percent of all stocks traded on the JSE. There are only three black-owned companies listed, two established in the last year. All black-owned businesses combined account for less than 1 percent of South Africa's total economic output.

There has been no lack of advice and debate about what Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) should do next. Everyone from the outgoing government and the business community to the World Bank and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has been eager to "educate the ANC." The world economic climate, recession in South Africa, the collapse of state-socialist models in Europe and the ANC's own commitment to national unity and restraining white flight—all have combined to produce a sobering pragmatism among officials of the new government. Talk of socialism and nationalization has been played down, if not entirely abandoned. Yet many in the ANC's grass-roots

*Mandela now faces the hard task of overcoming apartheid's devastating social and economic legacy.*

By William Minter



constituency expect and will demand drastic changes.

For its part, the outgoing government advocates a supply-side emphasis on providing investment incentives. The driving force behind former Finance Minister Derek Keys' Normative Economic Model is lower tax rates, in the hopes of stimulating the private sector. This is a recipe for the status quo with minor modifications, say critics.

The World Bank has produced policy recommendations on sectors such as agriculture and housing, stressing reliance on market mechanisms. And it has proposed a policy committed to "export-led growth" with particular emphasis on rationalizing the tariff structure and reducing protection for domestic industries.

The ANC's program, in contrast, lays the major stress on jump-starting the economy with major social infrastructure expenditures. The ANC concedes that without significant economic growth, it will not be able to address the pressing problems of economic inequality, poverty and stagnation.

Advocating a strategy of "growth through redistribution," the ANC's program lays greater emphasis on the demand side of the economic equation. ANC leaders argue that a more equal society—with the aid of vigorous state action—will increase consumer demand in multiple ways, thus stimulating investment and promoting economic growth.

Among the areas Mandela and other ANC officials have stressed as needing immediate attention are:

- **Redistribution of income:** ANC officials believe that by promoting a mass consumption market, redistribution will enable domestic business to operate with greater efficiency. And increasing incomes at the low end of the scale is an essential requirement for the growth of the very labor-intensive manufacturing sector, including the "informal sector".

- **Redistribution of educational opportunities:** The radical transformation of the current wasteful education system to one which could contribute to economic development is crucial. Deliberate increased investment by the new government in education and training, as well as research and development, will have a positive impact on economic growth.

- **Redistribution of infrastructural expenditure:** The provision of housing in a post-apartheid South Africa, a political and social necessity, can also contribute to economic growth. Construction makes a direct contribution to GDP and also provides important linkages, especially if related to a transformed construction and building material sector. More permanent settlements, coupled with widespread electrification, telephones and roads will create thousands of jobs. The multiplier effect on related industries will further boost accumulation of wealth.

- **Redistribution of power relations on the shopfloor:** The repressive authoritarian production relations of apartheid are no longer conducive to manufacturing capacity. Modern competitiveness requires that the labor force be treated as a resource rather than a cost to be minimized, and that organized workers have a major role in economic development, including planning.

To achieve such goals, the Mandela administration will

have to walk a narrow line between making compromises that are really necessary and conceding so much to entrenched bureaucracies and conventional wisdom that little changes for the majority of South Africa's disadvantaged.

Government officials committed to substantive change will need support—and constructive criticism—from grassroots organizations in South Africa's civil society and their outside allies.

The Clinton administration can, of course, play a big role in aiding the new South African government. As *In These Times* went to press, the White House was considering proposals to commit as much as \$160 million for USAID programs in South Africa. But while supporting quick and substantial aid to South Africa, advocacy groups such as the Washington Office on Africa argue that the funds must be new outlays. It would be a huge mistake for Clinton to simply appropriate the funds from the Development Fund for Africa—thus setting up a competition between South Africa and other African countries and taking funds away from even needier areas.

Also of concern are broader economic issues, in which the United States will likely reinforce international economic policy trends limiting South African options. The recently concluded Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, for example, could produce an estimated \$2.6 billion a year in trade losses for Africa by 2002, including \$400 million a year in losses for South Africa.

Many similar issues will face the new South African government as it confronts a difficult international economic policy environment. "South Africa should bargain with [the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank] from a position of strength and negotiate terms which support a strategy of development," argues a 1993 report that South African and international economists prepared for the ANC. If USAID serves, as past practice indicates, as leverage to reinforce indiscriminate acceptance of the advice of these institutions, it is quite possible that its positive contribution to South African development will be outweighed by the negative impact.

The United States can contribute to South Africa's future, through government programs, economic linkages and non-governmental connections. But that contribution can be constructive only if U.S. citizens also learn from their South African counterparts, and engage in serious dialogue about how to confront common problems of social injustice and achieve economic advancement that benefits majorities. The anti-apartheid struggle in the old mode is over, just as America's classic civil rights struggle waned with the end of segregation laws and the formal achievement of voting rights. In the struggle for social justice in South Africa as well as in the United States, that's where the hard part begins. ◀

William Minter is associate director of education for the Washington Office on Africa. Siza Ntshakala and Pernilla Ståhl assisted with this article, which was adapted with permission from the spring 1994 issue of *Washington Notes on Africa*, published by the Washington Office on Africa.

## Creative Thinking in These Critical Times

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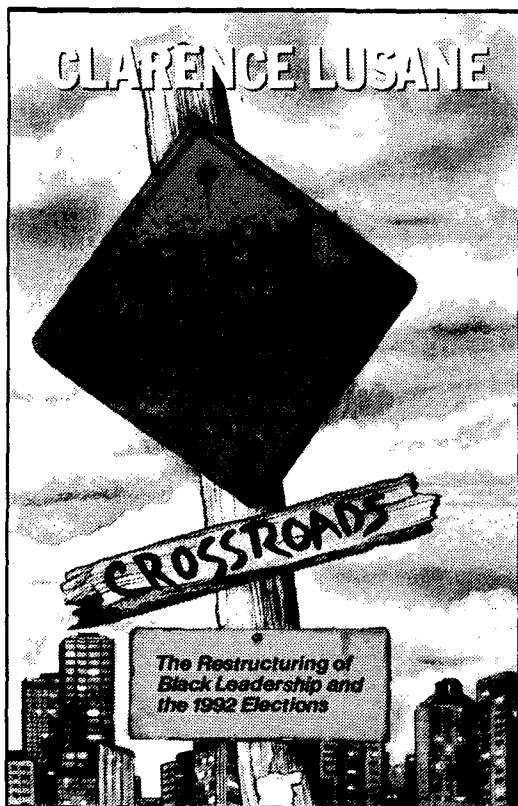
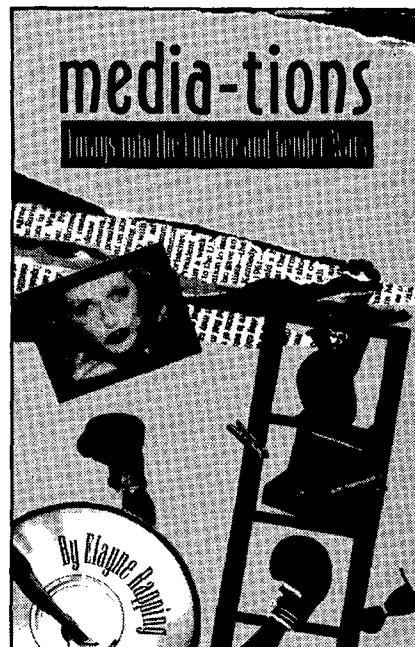
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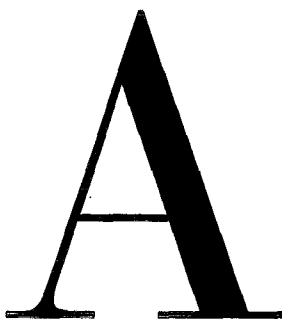
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## SOUTH AFRICA

# Seeds of change



*The victory  
of the ANC  
shows the  
power of a  
multiracial,  
multinational  
vision.*

By James North

A political change like South Africa's has never happened before in human history. For the first time ever, a ruling class conceded a measure of political power without being either defeated in the battlefield or having its military and police disintegrate.

The triumph at the ballot box by Nelson Mandela and the other black, white and Indian South Africans who are entering the new Parliament under the African National Congress (ANC) banner is inspiring news for all those troubled by the rise of bitter ethnic and racial conflict on several continents during the last few years.

The ANC is not a "black liberation movement," and its electoral victory does not mean that apartheid is being replaced by a "black government." The organization's victory is a triumph for something

called "non-racialism."

The anti-apartheid movement inside South Africa has struggled over "non-racialism" for 40 years. In 1955, the ANC and other groups, representing all the colors in South Africa, met outside Johannesburg to draw up the Freedom Charter, a blueprint for the nation's future. The very first line of the document states plainly that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white."

Within the black community, voices rose to reject that first sentence. They argued that South Africa "belonged" to "Africans," and that whites and others were "foreigners" or "settlers." Some of those who supported this stance were impressive and humane people, but there were also those who spoke of "pushing whites into the sea." In 1959, the ANC split over the issue.

After the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, both the ANC and the rival Pan-Africanist Congress were banned, and leaders of both groups (including Mandela) were imprisoned. It was against the law even to publish Mandela's photograph, much less discuss the

Freedom Charter.

So when black high school students began the Soweto uprising in the summer of 1976, few of them knew anything about the debates over "non-racialism." The regime's police opened fire indiscriminately on the peaceful marchers—and many involved in the uprising fled to neighboring countries, arming themselves so they could return and shoot the first white people they saw.

There, outside South Africa, they met exiled representatives of the ANC. One of them was my friend Stanley Mabizela, whom the organization had posted to Swaziland. Mabizela had guns; part of his duty was to recruit people for the ANC's growing guerrilla army. But he also had a deep commitment to the non-racial ideal, despite having spent years in prison before leaving his country. He, along with other ANC leaders across the region—from Swaziland to Robben Island, the notorious prison off of Cape Town—began to enter into conversations with angry young people eager for revenge.

Mabizela used to say to me: "We tell the youth that we know that other groups may teach 'blackness,' but that we as an organization are against racism, and if we engage in that kind of politics it will be racism in reverse. The most important factor is that each person is a human being. Maybe it's my Christian upbringing, but I could never agree to pushing those white people into the sea."

Those angry young people—whose only contact with white people inside segregated South Africa may have been with the security officers who supervised their interrogations—listened. And most of them were convinced.

What is surprising is not that there has been violence in



recent months, but that there has been so little of it. If black South Africans had decided to conduct racial war, the carnage would have been unbelievable. It was non-racialism that made the historic compromise possible.

In South Africa, racial and ethnic politics have failed. White separatists set off bombs, but their efforts to derail the voting failed. Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the arch-tribalist, fared poorly at the polls. Other forces in the black community, who campaigned with the anti-white slogan "One settler, one bullet," were also largely ignored.

The ANC victory is not only a triumph for non-racialism, but it also is an instructive example of how an international alliance can change history.

Clearly, the courageous uprisings inside the country in 1976, in 1980 and again starting in 1984 did emphatically challenge the apartheid regime's dominance. For a time, the government could enter certain areas of South Africa only with a major show of force; some young whites began to defy the military draft; and by the end of the '80s there were murmurings of discontent within the ranks of black police.

But the South African military was far from beaten. The worldwide arms embargo imposed in 1978 had prevented it from acquiring the very latest high-performance warplanes, but it was otherwise well equipped, manufacturing much of its own weaponry, including nuclear arms. Most whites continued to support the regime.

Yet in 1990, President F.W. de Klerk freed Mandela and other political prisoners and agreed to elections that he and his supporters knew would give a significant degree of political power to the very people they had been viciously fighting for decades. Why?

A large part of the answer is economic. Because of South Africa's dependence on foreign investment, economic sanctions—even the limited measures that were passed over the opposition of Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher—were a tremendous success. In 1985, Western banks stopped rolling over their South African loans. And Western corporations, including the 350 American firms that by 1983 had invested a total of \$2.3 billion in apartheid, also started to desert the country in the face of rising pressure from their own stockholders. The South African currency immediately plunged, dramatically raising the cost of maintaining apartheid and threatening the white

standard of living.

But possibly even more important was the damage to white morale. The whites who supported apartheid had gotten accustomed to ritual denunciations, but they were reassured by everyday evidence of Western complicity in their economy, from Col. Sanders' Kentucky Fried Chicken to Control Data mainframe computers. Dennis Brutus, the black South African poet who was active in the anti-

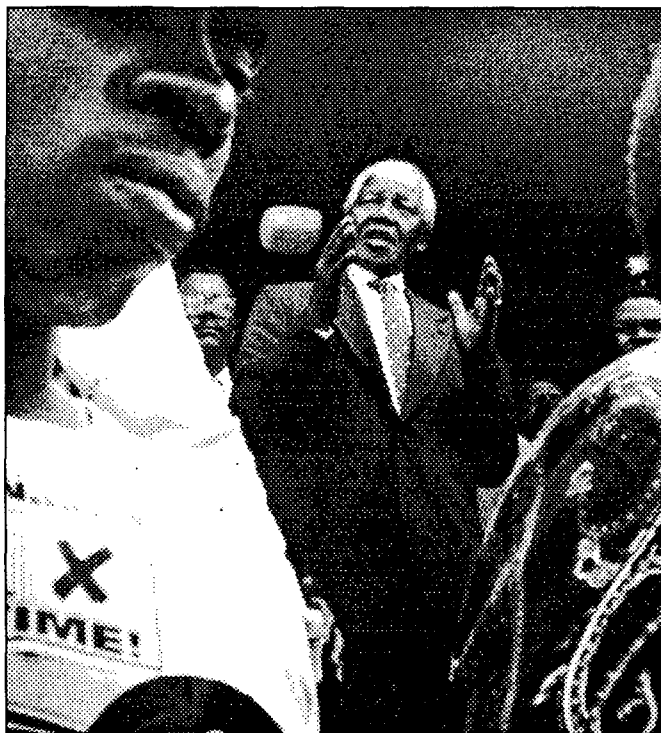
apartheid movement in the United States, used to recall his conversation with a young warder during his time on the Robben Island prison fortress, back in the '60s. "You can never win," the warder had said to him with conviction. "America will never let us down."

But America did, finally, abandon the apartheid regime—and the American left should not be shy about taking considerable credit for the change in South Africa. It was the left, black and white, that led the struggle for decades. It was the left that won victories in Congress, state legislatures and city councils, even at a time when the Reagan counterrevolution was at its peak.

The victory in South Africa suggests how to fight on in a globalizing economy. Big banks and corporations do strengthen themselves by expanding across the world, but they also make themselves potentially vulnerable. Cooperation between segments of the American and Mexican labor movements has already been noticed by *Business Week*. A union-sponsored boycott of Nike athletic shoes for its employment practices in Asian sweatshops is making the company squirm. Union organizers and human rights advocates are pushing the government to link trade with China to improvements in labor and human rights there. In a globalizing economy, only an autarchy—an economy that aims for self-sufficiency—is free from pressure, and there are almost no autarchies left.

We are left to ponder a curious set of paradoxes: the nation that until last week symbolized racial hatred has now become one of the world's greatest hopes for reconciliation; and the nation that for so many years stood so defiantly against the world has become a symbol of the efficacy of international cooperation. ◀

James North, who teaches journalism at New York University, is the author of *Freedom Rising* (Macmillan). Portions of this article appeared, in somewhat different form, in the *Chicago Tribune*.



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the Gulf War

Foreword by Ben H. Bagdikian

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## THE PRESIDENCY

## Nixon's the one

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*But which  
one—the  
corrupt  
power-monger  
or the skilled  
diplomat?*

By John B. Judis  
WASHINGTON D.C.

On the day of Richard Nixon's funeral, I wore a T-shirt emblazoned with the slogan, "He's tan, rested and ready: Nixon in '88." I had purchased the shirt six years earlier at a presidential cattle show in Orlando. The Young Republicans were selling them to raise money, but also because they believed, as did I, that, for all his faults, Nixon stood head and shoulders above the men who were vying that year for the Republican nomination. What was then a dissenting note has now become a dominant chord. In death, Nixon looms larger than he ever did in life.

There is one historical insight contained in this new view of Nixon: he was, as it turns out, the most important politician of the post-World War II era. He shaped American and world politics during six decades—from his leader-

ship in the Alger Hiss case in 1948 to his meeting this March with Russia's Alexander Rutskoi. His presidency came during America's transition from unchallenged world leader to what Nixon called a "pitiful, helpless giant." He responded to this epochal change with far-reaching policies that remain a high-water mark of American diplomacy.

I can't pronounce a simple verdict of good or evil upon Nixon. What characterized his actions from the beginning was great boldness. His results, however, were mixed. Nixon contributed to the end of the Cold War, but he also unnecessarily prolonged the Vietnam War, leading to the destruction of his own presidency. He initiated a new stage of state capitalism, but also used state power illegally and unconstitutionally to serve his own narrow, partisan ends. What follows are some of the high and low points of the Nixon record.

**Politics:** Nixon loved the game, but he played it fiercely and without moral compunction. His first congressional race in 1946, for a seat representing California's

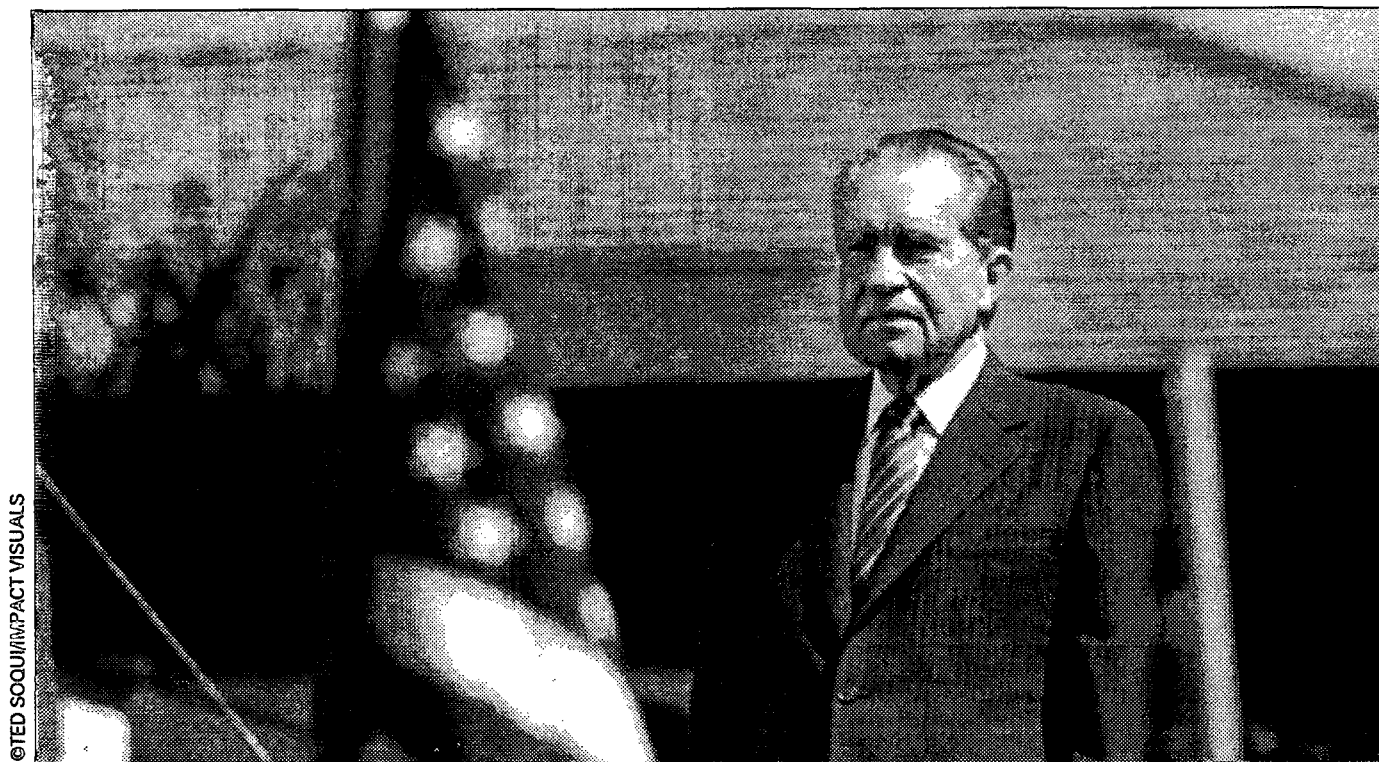
Orange County, was a milestone in the degeneration of American politics. What we now call "negative campaigning" had flourished in the early 19th century, but had largely disappeared by the '40s. Nixon revived this older tradition.

His opponent that year, incumbent Democrat Jerry Voorhis, was an Adlai Stevenson-style liberal who believed in world federalism but was also adamantly anti-communist. In 1940, Voorhis had sponsored a bill, similar to the Smith Act, that would have required agents of foreign powers to register with the federal government. Nevertheless, Nixon focused his 1946 campaign on tying Voorhis to communists and communist organizations. This was ruthless and slanderous politicking. Nixon employed the same tactics in his succeeding campaigns, leading conservative Republican Sen. Robert Taft to the judgment that Nixon had "a mean and vindictive streak in him."

The only time Nixon didn't use negative campaigning was in his 1960 race against John Kennedy—but that was because he was trying to please Dwight Eisenhower, who believed that presidential candidates shouldn't stoop to gutter tactics. Nixon's presidential campaign in 1968 didn't dwell on the communist threat, but on the new bogeyman of racial disorder. He did it with subtlety.

At the end of the 1964 president campaign, GOP candidate Barry Goldwater had refused to air an ad that employed images of riot and rebellion in an attempt to link President Johnson to the ghetto uprisings then taking place. But Nixon did not hesitate to tie the Democrats to urban unrest. He campaigned on a "law and order" platform intended to draw Southern whites and Northern ethnics





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away from segregationist George Wallace. This political strategy, refined in 1972 and dubbed (somewhat inaccurately) Nixon's "Southern strategy," resulted in the polarization of the political parties along racial lines. The Republicans, once the party of Lincoln, became the party of white resentment, and, fairly or not, the Democrats became widely perceived as the party of black militants.

**Foreign policy:** Nixon has been rightly heralded for his broader achievements in foreign policy, but his foresight, epitomized by the opening to China, was always combined with a blindness about military intervention. Of all the other major postwar leaders, he seemed to most resemble Soviet Premier Nikita Krushchev, who also combined insight with bluster, peacemaking with military adventurism.

Nixon's foreign policy views were never conventional. During the late '40s, he broke with the isolationist Republican right wing—including his political base in Orange County—by supporting NATO and the Marshall Plan. He was an Eisenhower rather than a Taft Republican, and saw the importance of creating international alliances against communism. But Nixon also favored the military escalation of the Cold War, believing that communist influence could not only be contained but rolled back. During the Korean War, he backed Gen. Douglas MacArthur's ill-fated plan to push the North Koreans back to the Yalu River, a move that precipitated China's intervention. Then Nixon pushed for carrying the war to China by bombing Manchuria. In 1954, when the French were being defeated by the Vietnamese communists, Nixon backed American military intervention. In 1961, after the Bay of Pigs, he urged John Kennedy to invade Cuba, and during the first years of the

Vietnam War he attacked Johnson for timidity.

From 1963 to 1967, when Nixon was out of office and practicing law in New York, his overall foreign policy outlook changed. He began to replace his ideological, even religious, view of the Cold War with a more classical European understanding of the balance of power. Nixon developed the ability, in his words, "to take the long view." He began to see past the Cold War toward a time when "the United States no longer is in the position of complete pre-eminence or predominance" and when "economic power will be the key to other kinds of power."

Once in office, Nixon rejected an ideological approach to international politics and set out to reconstruct world alliances along balance-of-power lines. He also revived Franklin Roosevelt's idea of using great-power alliances to settle small-power disputes in Southeast Asia and the Mideast. And Nixon altered the terrain of international economics. In recognition of America's relative decline, he abandoned the Bretton Woods agreement, which fixed the dollar as the world's currency, and he used tariff barriers to force other countries to remove their own trade barriers and revalue their currency. In fact, Nixon inaugurated the era of managed trade and currency negotiation in which we now find ourselves.

But Nixon's innovations in geopolitics and geoeconomics coexisted with his disastrous policy in Vietnam. As a candidate, Nixon had committed himself to negotiating an end to the war. But once in office, he decided that he could force the North Vietnamese to sign an agreement on his terms—a misjudgment that led him to prolong the war for four more years. Vietnam also brought out the worst in

Nixon's character. In October 1972, Nixon could have forced the South Vietnamese government to sign the agreement that his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, had reached with North Vietnam, but the president was unwilling to risk a rift during the election. Instead, he prolonged the negotiations for three more months, using the murderous Christmas bombing of North Vietnam to assure the South Vietnamese of his good intentions. The Nixon of Vietnam was not a Quaker peacemaker, but a brutal warmonger.

**Domestic policy:** Nixon never showed great interest in domestic policy, mostly delegating it to White House assistants and cabinet officers. He also did not have the kind of technical-ideological preconceptions in economics that Ronald Reagan or George Bush had. His approach was opportunistic: he was willing to do whatever would create sufficient prosperity to ensure his re-election. That flexibility proved to be an advantage in 1971, when he was confronted with growing unemployment, rising prices and the first trade deficit since 1893. Nixon's innovative response combined deficit spending ("We are all Keynesians now," he declared) with wage and price controls. Though Nixon's daring strategy ultimately failed—the energy crisis undermined any effort to control prices—it set a precedent in peacetime state intervention that future presidents might someday want to emulate.

Nixon also surrounded himself with a politically diverse and creative set of domestic policy-makers, including Pat

Moynihan (now a New York Democratic senator), Arthur Burns (later chair of the Federal Reserve), and George Shultz (later secretary of state under Reagan). Nixon's welfare plan, devised by Moynihan, would have cut through the welfare bureaucracy by promising all Americans a guaranteed annual income. His plan for national health insurance resembled the Democratic "pay or play" proposal that would have mandated employers to provide universal coverage. In purely conventional terms, Nixon's domestic policy (as opposed to his politics) was more "liberal" than Jimmy Carter's—and is also to the left of what Clinton is now proposing.

Assessing Nixon's presidency is a complicated undertaking. He was himself part of the process of national decline that he sought to understand and arrest. He poisoned American political life: there is a direct line between Nixon's law-and-order campaign of 1968 and Bush's Willie Horton campaign of 1988; between Watergate and the institutional anarchy that continues to plague the White House's relationship with Congress.

But there is also a direct line between Nixon's attempts to create a new "structure of peace" and the halting attempts by Bush and Clinton to fashion a "new world order"; between Nixon's economic diplomacy and Clinton's efforts to negotiate new trade relationships with Japan and Western Europe.

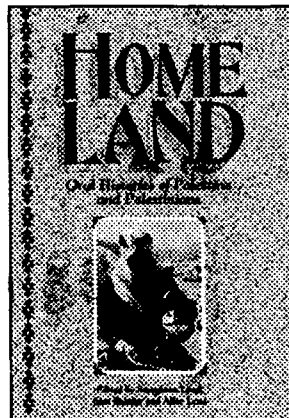
Nixon is no longer tan, rested and ready; but he continues to influence how we see ourselves and the world. ◀

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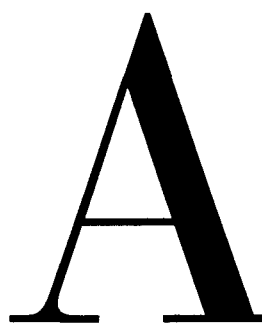
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**BLACK AMERICA**

# Muhammad speaks



frican-American activists used to characterize Howard University in Washington, D.C., as the "service academy for the black bourgeoisie." But after hosting a few speeches from leading figures on the black outrage circuit, the 124-year-old institution now finds itself fighting off charges that it is instead an ideological center of black supremacy and anti-Semitism.

At the core of the controversy is a group called Unity Nation, a student organization founded in 1988 by a Howard senior named Malik Zulu Shabazz, designed to acquaint students with the black nationalist doctrines of the Nation of Islam (NOI). Since that time, Shabazz's Unity Nation has sponsored several campus events featuring NOI speakers, including leader Louis Farrakhan.

*The predictable outrageousness of black nationalist demagogues disguises their autocratic conservatism.*

By Salim Muwakkil

It was a CBS broadcast of a Unity Nation rally that catapulted Howard into national prominence earlier this year. With television cameras recording the event for *Eye to Eye with Connie Chung*, Shabazz—who is now a second-year law student at Howard—led a chant accusing Jews of being major perpetrators of slavery, leading betrayers of Nat Turner and Martin Luther King Jr., and of initiating other historical offenses. This flagrant exercise in scapegoating was part of Shabazz's introduction to a speech by Khalid Abdul Muhammad, the former Farrakhan aide who ostensibly was stripped of authority for making similarly coarse statements.

Speakers at the February rally said predictably outrageous things about Jews, "bootlicking" blacks and whites in general. But it was the supportive audience reaction that triggered much of the negative press about the school. Ignoring the fact that much of the audience consisted of non-students, many in the media portrayed Howard itself as an incubator for the kind of irrational nation-

alism on display at the Unity Nation rally.

The widespread public criticism provoked a heated response from Howard's outgoing president, Franklyn Jenifer, who said CBS' characterization of the school as "a breeding ground for a new generation of racists and anti-Semites is dishonest, unethical, immoral and irresponsible." Jenifer, who soon will leave Howard for the University of Texas at Dallas, said the report magnified the significance of a small student group in order to taint the entire school.

But a little more than a month later, another Unity Nation rally attracted an enormous crowd to hear what one participant described as the "Anti-Semitic Dream Team." Assembled under the auspices of Shabazz's group were Leonard Jeffries, controversial chairman of the African Studies Department of the City College of New York; Steve Cokely, the Chicago activist who gained fame for accusing Jewish doctors of intentionally spreading AIDS by vaccinating black children; Tony Martin, professor of African Studies at Wellesley College and author of a volume entitled *The Jewish Onslaught*, a book that chronicles his struggle with Jewish groups about a controversial book used in his courses; and Khalid Abdul Muhammad.

The rally was billed as "The Black Holocaust Observance." A capacity crowd cheered as the various speakers found creative ways to express the major theme: that the holocaust of African slavery was considerably worse than the "so-called" Jewish holocaust.

For those of us who were carried away in the black nationalist surge of the late '60s and early '70s, the rally was a shocking reminder of history's cyclical nature. Those on

the star-studded dais were ranked by the degree of public outrage each had provoked: Muhammad received top billing, and his speech was indeed the most outrageous.

Among other things, the NOI's former national representative reprised his charge that European Jews are "imposter, perpetrating-a-fraud Jews." Adding a new outrage to his repertoire, Muhammad praised Colin Ferguson, the Jamaican immigrant charged with killing five and wounding 18 others in what appeared to be a racially motivated shooting spree on the Long Island Railroad. Ferguson, he said, "was sent by God, just like Nat Turner."

Muhammad took every opportunity to emphasize what he sees as the difference in significance between the Jewish holocaust and the black holocaust. He said Steven Spielberg's critically acclaimed movie *Schindler's List* used the Nazi holocaust to divert attention from Jews' complicity in the African slave trade. "It should be called 'swindler's list,'" he said.

Much of Muhammad's rap is carefully designed to offend mainstream sensibilities—and to disguise with outrageous "radical" rhetoric the NOI's autocratic conservatism. Seasoned activists tend to disregard such messengers of outrage, at best, as innocuous vehicles of catharsis. But it is a mistake to ignore the growing appeal of the devil-made-me-do-it demagogues among African-American youth.

During the "black holocaust" rally, one Unity Nation member threatened to attack black musicians who failed to subscribe to his group's particular notion of morality. "We will not tolerate you misrepresenting us before the world," said Yohann Rakeen, as the capacity crowd roared its approval. "We will snatch you off the stage and whip your black ass."

This threat of physical intimidation is a typical example of what can happen when the expression of doctrinal intolerance remains unchallenged. At the heart of this dogmatism is a crude kind of genetic theology, based largely on NOI beliefs, which many black youth increasingly perceive as the only oppositional game in town.

African-American progressives have been reluctant to challenge the rise of these genetic determinists for a number of reasons—seeing in some of this rhetoric a valid critique of the white supremacist status quo, and seeing the NOI's emphasis on personal responsibility as a healthy antidote to the cultural nihilism currently at large in too many black communities. And, since doctrinal disagreements have been easily exploited in the past by those opposed to the black freedom movement, it seems best to publicly present a black united front.

But perhaps the most influential reason why black supremacist doctrines remain effectively unchallenged these days is the lack of any alternative vision. Farrakhan's varied acolytes frame their indictments of the United States within an easily understandable context of good vs. evil; such simple dichotomies are easy to sell. Communism's collapse has discredited Marxist-Leninist thought and has deprived progressives of a certain kind of ideological clarity. Nuanced

arguments seldom attract crowds.

By contrast, the crowds drawn to Farrakhan and, alas, Muhammad are getting larger. And younger; the NOI's influence among African-American youth has been amplified by hip-hop culture's embrace of Farrakhan. Further interest has been generated by Farrakhan's audacious promise to lead a march on Washington of 1 million black men sometime in 1995. In such an atmosphere, it is becoming more difficult for black organizers and theorists to express opposition to the NOI's racial theology.

Sensing the problem implicit in the NOI's increasing popularity, a number of black progressives have attempted to take some action. A group of progressive Christian ministers in the Boston area, led by the Revs. Ray Hammond and Eugene Rivers, have written an open letter to Farrakhan questioning the NOI's historic involvement with acts of violent intimidation directed at critics.

Zak Kondo, assistant professor of African Diasporan history at Bowie State University in Maryland, has authored a book, *Conspiracys: Unravelling the Assassination of Malcolm X* (Nubia Press), which strongly implicates the NOI in the killing and urges Farrakhan to come clean. "Our people cannot permit organizations such as the NOI to threaten or punish positive brothers ... or others committed to holding our leaders accountable," he writes. "I appeal to Farrakhan to tighten the reins of the NOI so that 'zealots' will not be given any reason to believe that they are justified by the NOI to attack critics."

Other groups around the country are belatedly revving up to launch similar campaigns to distinguish themselves from the genetic determinists and to insist that the NOI be held accountable to someone other than the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, the group's late patriarch and "divine" connection. But the NOI's defensive reaction to the Boston ministers—they were ridiculed at a Black Muslim rally and some were threatened with violence—suggests that the dialogue will be at best a strained one.

The issue was placed in stark relief during Howard's "Black Holocaust Observance" when Shabazz told the cheering crowd to assert itself and start following Farrakhan's example: "Stop acting like some bourgeois black faggot and stand up behind God's man." ▴

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**R U S S I A**

# Riders on the storm

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*Czarist  
Russia's  
legendary horse  
warriors, the  
Cossacks, are  
charging back.*

By Fred Weir  
NOVOCHERKASSK, RUSSIA

Nikolai Kozytsin is a heavily armed specter, riding straight out of Russia's past with a list of tough demands for Moscow's new leaders. "The Cossacks were masters of the art of war," says Kozytsin, an ornately uniformed military *ataman* (leader) of the Don Cossacks, the largest grouping of Russia's legendary horse warriors. "Our statehood and traditions were stripped away by the Bolsheviks, and now we want them revived," he says.

Kozytsin, though a young man, is already a battle-scarred veteran. His regiments of armed Don Cossacks have recently tipped the scales in several wars that are raging on the periphery of the former Soviet Union, including nearby Moldova and Abkhazia. "We have an obligation to defend Russian people and Russian interests,"

Kozytsin says.

In previous centuries, Cossacks were the elite troops of the Russian empire, serving as the Czar's personal escort and the empire's frontier guards. Organized into tight military communities, they expanded the imperial frontiers in Siberia, Central Asia and the Caucasus, and often stayed on to farm the land and to guard the borders against restless native populations. In return for their military service, Russian Czars granted a host of special privileges to the Cossacks, including self-government on their own territories and the right to maintain their own autonomous armed formations.

Now, across southern Russia, the Cossacks are again stirring. Suppressed for seven decades by the Communists, their villages folded into collective farms and their famous military regiments disbanded, the Cossacks are seeking full restoration of their Czarist-era privilege to bear arms and the right to autonomy on their traditional lands.

The historic Cossack capital is Novocherkassk, a hilltop fortress city on the dusty steppes near the Don River in southern Russia. And it is here that a new generation of Cossack leaders has established their headquarters.

"We demand Cossacks be recognized as a distinct people," says Ivan Umanets, aide to the Don Cossacks' supreme leader, *ataman* Vasily Kaledin. "We want our territory, property, culture and traditions all restored and recognized in the Constitution of the Russian Federation." Eager to enlist the Cossacks' support, but also fearful of their power, the Russian government of President Boris Yeltsin has issued a string of decrees granting their demands while making no move to enforce their implementation.

"The process of restoring our communities is going on, but there are massive obstacles to this," complains Umanets. "The authorities are afraid of being called to account for what happened to the Cossacks under communism, so they are stalling our revival." More than a million Cossacks have registered with the new "government" at Novocherkassk over the past two years. In 1917, before the Bolshevik Revolution, there were almost 5 million Cossacks.

The Cossacks have already recreated their former military regiments and have launched a campaign to convince authorities to grant them official status within the Russian army. In dozens of camps along the Don River this summer, young Cossacks will march and maneuver and learn to handle sophisticated weapons. The speed with which they are developing into a real force has set alarm bells ringing in Moscow's democratic community.

"Fewer and fewer people in Russia now think of the Cossacks as harmless people in carnival clothes," writes Andrei Malgin, editor of the weekly newsmagazine *Stolitsa*. "Some





"I come from Cossack stock myself," says Vladimir Zakharov, a coal miner in the nearby town of Shakhti. "But that's tradition. I don't see much relevance in Cossack ways for solving today's problems. If Cossacks move beyond dressing up in old uniforms, waving imperial flags and staging parades, I fear they will only come into conflict with other parts of the population."

Local government leaders, who also see the Cossacks as a threat, have refused to turn over land and buildings to them, even though central authorities in Moscow have ordered it.

Ironically, the Cossacks' independent communal lifestyle clashes with President Yeltsin's vision of the new Russia almost as sharply as it did with Lenin's seven decades ago. The basic unit of Cossack society was the *stanitsa*, a self-governing farming community in which the land was held in common and apportioned to each family according to need. "A Cossack lives within the community and never sells land," declares Umanets.

Accordingly, the Cossacks are demanding that the new Russian Constitution, which enshrines a free market on land, be amended to ban the sale of land on their traditional territories. At the beginning of the 20th century,

there were 12 Cossack *voiska* (political-military regions), spread across southern Russia and Siberia, totaling about 230,000 square miles. The Cossacks want this vast expanse, which includes some of the nation's best farmland and many new population centers, returned to their traditional rule.

Cossack law, which prescribes public whipping for most offenses, is regarded by local authorities as a medieval cruelty. Officials also worry that Cossack demands for full police powers in their areas could lead to sharp ethnic conflicts: after nearly a century of industrialization and urbanization in the Don River basin, the traditional Cossack lands are inhabited by a far more ethnically and socially diverse population than in the glory days of *Kazachestvo* (Cossackdom).

"The Cossacks are already strutting around here, wearing their uniforms and pushing people out of the way," says Georgi Abkenadze, a taxi driver whose grandparents came to Novocheerkassk from the north Caucasus four decades ago. "They have guns and their own military encampments. If they get power, people like me will have to look for new homes."

Fred Weir is a frequent contributor to *In These Times*.

fear them like the plague, but others are counting on the Cossacks to help restore tough discipline in Russia."

Over the past two years, the Cossacks have plunged enthusiastically back into their traditional wars against Russia's non-Slavic neighbors. In the breakaway "Dniester Republic" in eastern Moldova, Cossack regiments under *ataman* Kozytsin, rushing to aid their "Slavic brethren," turned a complex political problem into a bloody conflagration. In Abkhazia, Cossack "volunteers" helped to defeat Eduard Shevardnadze's Georgian legions and bring that rich Black Sea province back under Russia's influence. Armed Cossacks are fighting today as far afield as Tajikistan, Nagorno-Karabakh and Bosnia.

"Orthodox Christian belief and military service to the Fatherland are basic features of Cossack existence," says Kozytsin. "These are the cornerstones of peace and order."

The Cossacks have a reputation as arch-reactionaries. In the Don region, they are remembered nervously by local coal miners and factory workers for their role in crushing workers' strikes during Czarist times, and by national minorities for the many pogroms they led against Jews and brown-skinned Caucasian peoples.

## VIEWPOINT

# Civilization and its discontents

By Richard Wells

Samuel Huntington's essay, "The Clash of Civilizations," which ran in the summer '93 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, caused quite a stir, enough to generate 23-odd pages of comments in the next issue. Moreover, the fall issue advertised a *Foreign Affairs Reader* entitled "The Clash of Civilizations—The Debate." For just \$7.95 you could get the original essay and all its critiques in one small pamphlet.

The debate, not very illuminating in and of itself, provides a poignant example of the narrowness of political discussion in this country, and of the need for other perspectives to be heard.

Huntington, a distinguished professor of political science at Harvard's Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, argues that future world conflict will be dictated not so much by state interests per se but by *culture*. Citing the recent spate of "ethnic cleansing" in the Balkans, he asserts that "the Velvet Curtain of culture has replaced the Iron Curtain of ideology as the most significant dividing line in Europe." This is also true on a global scale, for "Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian,

Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures."

According to Huntington, therefore, future hot spots will be along the simmering borders separating an expanding Western cultural system from the Others, who don't cherish the same progressive values.

But there is a way out—if the Other civilizations, the Other cultures, are able to "modernize," that is, begin to enjoy the material fruits that the West has so long enjoyed, without threatening local traditions and stirring the sleeping ogre of nationalism.

Of course, as Edward Said has shown us—and as Huntington doesn't seem to realize—the claims the West makes on the Other, in the social sciences or in its art and literature, can expose the West's own lopsided politi-

cal and economic power rather than inform us of the "realities" in the non-Western world. In the "Clash of Civilizations," we in fact find out little about any of the actors beyond predictable typologies.

Of greater interest than Huntington's essay, of course, is the supposed debate that it has inspired. In their essays in the volume, representing a more or less centrist position, Robert Bartley, Jeane Kirkpatrick and Fouad Ajami reject Huntington's strong emphasis on the power of culture.

Bartley, editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, argues that culture will be less of a cause for global tensions than the ongoing struggle toward economic development within the non-Western world. Bartley believes that "Western values" are an artifact of development itself. They will take hold during the process of modernization but will grate against the more traditional values of developing societies. The Mullahs, he suggests, "profess to reject the decadent West, but their underlying quarrel is with modernity."

Kirkpatrick, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and now professor of government at Georgetown University, takes a similar tack. "The most important and explosive differences involving Muslims are found in the Muslim world," she says, "between persons, parties and governments who are reasonably moderate, non-expansionist and non-violent, and those who are anti-modern, and anti-Western, extremely intolerant, expansionist and violent." And for his part, Ajami, professor of Middle Eastern studies at Johns Hopkins University and a favorite Mideast media expert, shares Bartley's and Kirkpatrick's confidence in the forces of modernity. Huntington, he says, "has underestimated the tenacity of modernity and secularism in places that acquired these ways against great odds, always close to the abyss, the darkness never far."

*A debate in  
Foreign Affairs  
inadvertantly  
demonstrates the  
limitations of  
Western thought.*

In opposition to the arguments of the "modernists," Kishore Mahbubani, Singapore's deputy secretary of foreign affairs, and Liu Binyan, a Chinese dissident, defend Other cultures, rightly pointing out the tensions within Western civilization. Look at yourself, and tread lightly, they say. We will achieve modernity, and at our own, unthreatening pace. Leave us alone—but don't fear us.

At the other end of the spectrum, Gerard Piel, chairman emeritus of Scientific American Inc., confidently suggests that Other cultures don't exist at all. All of the "developing countries and the countries in transition," look upon the Western world as a role model and are "still engaged in conquest of the material world."

Here, then, is the "debate." But what would a truly dissenting voice have to say? Bartley's infatuation with the "Western values" of development and modernity is in fact a cover-up for a more dangerous infatuation with capitalist growth and greed, regardless of its effects. The violence of Kirkpatrick's "anti-Western" forces is a pinprick compared to the violence of neo-colonialism that made them "anti-Western" in the first place.

In any discussion of America's role in international affairs, there must at least be an awareness that the idealistic rhetoric of democracy and economic development rings hollow in much of the world. But such understanding is absent from the public debate over the "clash," as it is from the mainstream American press generally.

But *Foreign Affairs'* debate is symbolic of still deeper assumptions in American culture. Bartley's insistence that Western values are ingrained in "development"; Ajami's claim that outside modernity and secularism is "an abyss, a darkness never far"; and, above all, Kirkpatrick's suggestion that those in the Muslim world that are "anti-modern, anti-Western," must therefore also be "extremely intolerant, expansionist and violent." These absurd deductions stream from an assumption of cultural superiority that equates "modernity" with the "West,"

insisting that "development" is the only rational human goal.

These "rational" deductions empower Bartley to make a rather remarkable suggestion—especially remarkable considering the distance, physical and cultural, between him and his subject. "Do the women of Iran really long for the chador, or is it possible the people of the 'rest' will ultimately be attracted to the West?" he asks. Bartley is confident that he can speak for the Iranian woman, convinced she'd prefer a pair of jeans or a mini-skirt if it weren't for oppressive Islamic traditions.

Bartley's suggestion seems innocuous enough, because through Western eyes it appears Muslim women lack freedom. But isn't it possible that what a certain Muslim woman wears is dictated by something other than cultural tradition? Isn't it possible that donning the chador may be a political, practical or perhaps even a fashionable choice?

Clearly, these questions did not

occur to Bartley. In fact, such questions seldom surface in Western discourse about Muslim culture—which says something about the power Western observers have to impose their own values, whether consciously or unconsciously, on those they observe. If the implicit offer to join the Western club is rejected, it rarely occurs to Western observers to attribute this rejection to anything other than an irrational faith in an inferior and reactionary culture.

For an American reporter to write a story suggesting that an American woman's choice to wear a lycra mini-skirt was not a choice at all but a dictate of "tradition" is rather hard to imagine. But we say and think that about Muslim women and Muslim culture all the time. As Professor Said might say, "La Mission Civilstrace" is far from over.

Richard Wells is a graduate student in Near Eastern studies at New York University.

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# I N T H E A R T S

## Tender mercies

*A new film looks beyond the face value of money.*

By Pat Dowell

**I**n a capitalist society, money seems to have a life of its own—but never has legal tender displayed quite so much personality as in Keva Rosenfeld's *Twenty Bucks*. A single \$20 bill becomes the main character—witness, benefactor, nemesis, matchmaker and finally victim—as it flutters through varied lives touching off unexpected exchanges.

The double sawbuck represents more than mere money in some of these transactions. What people seek beyond the face value of cash is a mystery too subtle for most Hollywood studios to appreciate. (The greedily gross *It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World* accurately relays the industry's view of filthy lucre.) Love, respect, symbolic sacrifice and a fatal misunderstanding of one's limitations all come into play in this little fable, as characters wan-

der in and out of the film's ingenious mesh of stories.

The eponymous bill first appears sliding out of an ATM. It drops from its new owner's hand, and becomes the object of a tug-of-war between a bag lady (played by Linda Hunt) and a skateboarder. The victorious skateboarder spends the bill in a bakery, where a millionaire Arab immigrant and his soon-to-be-married daughter arrive to contemplate the wedding cake that ate Las Vegas. After receiving the \$20 bill as change, Daddy passes it on to his prospective son-in-law (Brendan Fraser) to cap a story about the extent of his resources on arriving long ago at U.S. customs.

And so it goes. The camera follows the bill's progress into a stripper's G-string, a birthday greeting to a teenager, the pocket of an extremely polite armed robber, a box of stolen property, a dead man's wallet, the moment when two lovers meet, the dreams of a lottery fiend, and eventually the bank drawer reserved for worn and crumpled bills on their way to the incinerator. A full life.

The screenplay of *Twenty Bucks* displays zippiest writing than we're used to in movies these days (and more of it too, with 50 speaking parts). It's the kind of writing that enlivened Hollywood outpourings in the golden age of the '30s and '40s—and thereby hangs a tale. The story of how *Twenty Bucks* was made is as charmingly eccentric as any vignette in the movie.

The screenplay was written in 1935 by the late Endre Bohem, a Hungarian immigrant who toiled in Hollywood from the silents to television, penning yeoman stories like this one. Many years later he turned his old scripts over to his son to encourage him to write. Leslie Bohem, who was the bass player for the band Sparks at the time, rewrote *Twenty Bucks*, and the new script attracted the attention of a producer—too late, alas, for Endre, who died in 1989.

That producer, Karen Murphy, brought in Keva Rosenfeld, a documentarian and, lately, the director of television's tabloid hit *Unsolved Mysteries*. (Maybe it's time to start watching that series.... Nahhhh.) A horde of Hollywood stalwarts and other interesting performers



**Twenty Bucks**  
Left to right: producer Karen Murphy, co-writer Leslie Bohem and director Keva Rosenfeld.

signed on for the ensemble, including Spalding Gray (a talky priest), Gladys Knight (a purveyor of spells), Steve Buscemi (a con man conned), and Christopher Lloyd (a proper crook).

Of all the intertwining stories, the one that is a perfect gem features Lloyd and Buscemi, the latter playing a nickel-and-dime con man invited on an evening of armed robbery by senior criminal Lloyd. The episode is as crisp as a new \$20 bill—and it unfolds prettily to a wow finish with a sardonic surprise that's worth a million.

Director Rosenfeld adds marvelous details to all the stories, like the forlorn wire coat hanger that dangles from that little hook over the rear side window in Buscemi's junkyard heap. It nicely sums up the loser's life.

*Twenty Bucks* was developed at Robert Redford's Sundance Institute, but not to worry, it's not dead earnest like so many Sundance properties. Linda Hunt's homeless lottery player threatens to become too twinkly, and the story of the writer (played by Elisabeth Shue) whose father tells her she's wasting her time threatens to crash *Twenty Bucks*.

Rosenfeld navigates these shoals deftly, however, and the gossamer script creates such sprightly coincidences that the contrivance of the plot never really seems like a contrivance at all. The Bohems continually surprise with the freshness of their characters. For instance, the black teenager played by Kamal Holloway is a specimen of that rare movie species, an African-American kid from the suburban middle class. He wants to be, of all things, a chef—and tries to spend the twenty on two bottles of white wine for his cassoulet.

*Twenty Bucks* takes a lighthearted approach to money. By the end, the \$20 bill even manages to bring two characters back into the movie and introduce them to each other for the likelihood of romance.

Other filmmakers have taken a dimmer view of the coin of the realm, notably Robert Bresson, the austere French master whose last film, *L'Argent*, was adapted from Leo Tolstoy's story, "The False Note." In that 1983 film, initially there is no central character except the counterfeit bill itself, which the camera follows in close-up from person to person, some unsuspecting of its potential for catastrophe, others ready to cash in on it.

With Bresson, there's no comedy, only inexorable fate as a young deliveryman finds his life ruined by the passage through it of this piece of paper. It's a remarkable film, as is all Bresson's work, and you can find it in a well-stocked video store or from the specialty mail-order rental houses Facets Video (800-331-6197) and Home Film Festival (800-258-3456).

Unavailable on video but sometimes shown on television is *Money Man*, Philip Haas' amusing recent documentary



about artist J.S.G. Boggs, who makes painstakingly hand-drawn reproductions of legal tender. Boggs is engaged in an enterprise that throws into high relief the fetishism of money (and art) in our society.

He doesn't try to pass off his bills as the real thing—i.e., he doesn't offer them as counterfeit. But he does try to strike barter exchanges for his bills; Haas follows one transaction in a restaurant, which is capped by a collector trying to buy the bartered Boggs bill with real money. Receipts and the cash together—the record of the transaction—make up the work of art. Boggs also tries to barter for stamps in a U.S. Post Office and threads his way through the Washington bureaucracy when the Treasury Department comes after him. It's an altogether winning film about the curious commodity that makes our world go round.

In *Twenty Bucks*, money spins the world in ways you'd never imagined, reaching beyond the grave to reveal a father's heart, for instance, and even giving a supernatural nudge to what's become the ultimate money game for most Americans, the lottery. In the not-too-distant future, *Twenty Bucks* will be a nostalgic reminder of the days of actual cash, which is on its way out. For now, how fitting that the long green should assume the starring role in a beguiling tale of human folly.

# IN PRINT

## The black maelstrom

By Salim Muwakkil

**M**y grandmother survived two husbands, two sons—and, had a .38-caliber bullet tracked a little differently when it entered my abdomen in 1968, she also would have outlived at least one of her grandsons. A longtime resident of Harlem, she's watched that beloved black community change from a poor but elegant outpost in the African diaspora into New Jack City; her heart has registered the loss of lives—mostly male lives—sacrificed to that transformation.

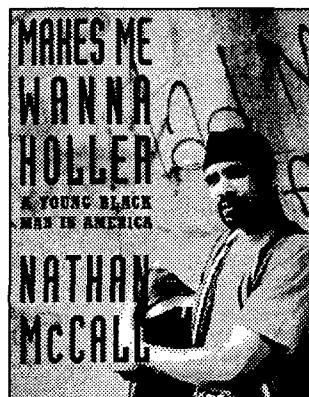
Her tale is all too typical. The United States has seldom been a pleasant place for black men, but the last few decades have been particularly deadly. Conferences examining the "endangered" status of African-American men have become regular features of the political landscape. Not only do we rank lowest on most indices of social status, but black men are burdened by a notion of masculinity that is literally self-destructive. Major conflicts can be provoked by minor insults to a perverse sense of manhood—and thus young black men are 10 times more likely to be murdered (or to murder) than comparable white men. "Rat, ta, tat tat, ta ta tat like that, and I never hesitate to put a Niggah on his back," sing Dr. Dre and Snoop Doggy Dogg, in what could be the urban anthem for the murderous '90s.

But African-American males with the requisite wherewithal have more access to mainstream America than ever before. Brent Staples, for example, climbed out of the ghetto to earn a doctorate at the University of Chicago and, less than a decade later, to become a member of the *New York Times*' prestigious editorial board. Staples was one of nine children, born to a poor housewife and an alcoholic truck driver. He is the only college graduate in the family. His drug-dealing brother was slain in a revenge shooting, and

that tragedy triggered a desire to take account of his life's varied incongruities. His recent book, *Parallel Time*, is the gratifying result of that self-assessment.

As a reporter for the *Washington Post*, Nathan McCall occupies a perch nearly as prestigious as Staples'—though his path to that mainstream success, as he shows in his memoir, *Makes Me Wanna Holler*, was far less direct. The two men's differing responses to similar circumstances demonstrate the complexity of our plight and the futility of easy answers.

McCall was drawn to the hard-boiled, fratricidal subculture of street life. "I eventually realized that there were only two types of dudes at Waters [Middle School]: solitary lames like me and those who got into the slick in-crowd," he writes. "The slickest among these guys were the older dudes, the thugs, who ran the school and hung in the streets. They were the most popular." McCall hungrily sought that popularity, and that led him onto a path of petty criminality and routine sexual assaults.



Staples, by contrast, assiduously avoided that world, but many of his friends and family fell under its sway. And through the stories of these two men we can catch a glimpse of how insidious the pull of negative inertia on the lives of urban black males really is. Although these two men have escaped the web of self-destruction that has ensnared so many of their cohorts, the drag lingers.

McCall spent three years in prison for armed robbery before he found the strength to overcome those socialized patterns of self-sabotage. After his release from prison he attended Norfolk State University and eventually became an accomplished journalist, first for the *Virginian Pilot-Ledger Star*, then for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and now for the *Washington Post*. His story of redemption and rehabilitation is a moving account of human growth.

Sanyika Shakur's book *Monster* offers a West Coast version of this coming-of-age story. While I recognize characters and contexts in Staples' and McCall's books, I feel

**Parallel Time: Growing Up in Black and White**  
By Brent Staples  
Pantheon Books  
274 pp., \$23

**Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America**  
By Nathan McCall  
Random House  
404 pp., \$23

**Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member**  
By Sanyika Shakur  
Atlantic Monthly Press  
383 pp., \$21



like an alien in Shakur's world. A member of Los Angeles' notorious Crips street gang, Shakur (a.k.a. Monster Kody Scott) introduces us to a cold, ruthless lifestyle in which murder has become routine.

Much of the book reads like the lyrics in a gangsta rap epic. Shakur tells tales of savage rip-offs and drive-by shootings (from cars and bicycles), candidly portraying a world horribly contorted by economic deprivation and cruelty.

Sitting in a hospital recovering from a vicious shotgun attack, Shakur reflected on the life that delivered him to death's door at the age of 16. "I had no idea of peace and tranquility," he writes. "From my earliest recollections there has been struggle, strife and the ubiquity of violence." He reviews the instability of his life's journey as a move "from one man-made hell to another. So I didn't care one way or another about living or dying—and I cared less than that about killing someone."

Shakur is a gifted writer. Though the book's violence seems hyperbolic and grotesque, Shakur's sober, assured prose gives it a terrifying authenticity. But Shakur's willingness to recount even the most barbaric aspects of his gangbanging past has triggered a good deal of criticism, as has his publisher's eagerness to hastily reproduce that recounting. One attack came from Brent Staples, who in his capacity as an editorial writer slammed *Monster* as an example of exploitative publishing. Staples is concerned that the mainstream's new focus on black America's ghetto poor—from suburbia's fascination with gangsta rap to the slew of "ghettocentric" movies coming out of Hollywood—distorts the overall portrait of a diverse and mostly law-abiding people.

Staples' *Parallel Time* reveals that his life was greatly influenced by a similar distaste for leveling stereotypes. His early insecurities energized an imagination that brought him into contact with interests his peers didn't share, and he yearned to con-



nect with the world beyond the tightly circumscribed black community of his hometown of Chester, Pa. He began to identify more with white culture, rejecting the music of Ray Charles, Sam Cooke and other black artists in favor of the newly popular Beatles. "In the bathrooms at school," he writes, "we huddled over transistor radios and went nuts for 'I Wanna Hold Your Hand.' " (This is a taste McCall and Shakur, incidentally, do not share. The title of McCall's book—*Makes Me Wanna Holler*—is a refrain from Marvin Gaye's song "Inner City Blues." Shakur's *Eight Tray Crips* might well shoot anyone putting a Beatles tape in the box.)

Staples left his hometown for the University of Chicago, where he earned a Ph.D. in psychology. For several years after that, he worked as a science reporter for the *Chicago Sun-Times* before being hired by his current employer. Throughout his journalism career Staples has been adamant about not letting his race define him. "Reporters who let that happen were condemned to a writing ghetto that they would never escape," he notes. "White reporters traveled all over the world, writing about everything. Black reporters were chained to the city desk, writing the ghetto story."

The stories of these three black men are emblematic; they reveal a dynamic that is ushering this country toward a racial crisis. While Staples sprinted to the mainstream, McCall has taken cautious, tentative steps toward it. Shakur has yet to get close; he remains incarcerated in the infamous Pelican Bay maximum security prison. Shakur has chosen separatist black nationalism as his way out, while Staples has opted for a kind of dignified assimilation. McCall has chosen a route somewhat in between these two, sharing a prison experience with Shakur and success in mainstream journalism with Staples.

All three are products of American racist history and the arc of their lives reveals the subtle but pervasive legacy of 200-plus years of slavery, a century of apartheid and a rich tradition of white supremacy. Much will have to change in order for more African-American men to be able to make it—or even to be able to outlive their grandmothers. ◀

# Do the right thing

By Paul Hockenos

**W**hen the two Germanies unified in 1990, some warned of the possibility of a new Fourth Reich. The network news shows contrasted images of skinheads hurling Molotov cocktails with Wehrmacht troops goose-stepping against a background of Nazi pageantry.

Today it is Russia, rather than the expanded Federal Republic, which evokes such ominous parallels. This time there is reason to take the comparisons seriously.

Like Germany in the '20s and '30s, Russia is a nation with a long history of tyranny, embarking on a new, experimental period of democracy at a time when its economy stands in ruins, with its empire shattered and its prestige badly bruised. In the country's first fully free elections last year, neo-fascist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy took 25 percent of the vote, and other hard-liners took another 20 percent. In many ways, the scenario looks more menacing than that of Germany in 1930.

In his excellent study of the Russian right, *Black Hundred*, historian Walter Laqueur refrains from overly general analogies between the two periods. Laqueur, a leading authority on Germany, Russia and fascism, sees the triumph of a full-blown fascism in Russia as unlikely, but warns that an authoritarian, national-populist option, some variant of nationalist socialism, could well be in the cards.

*Black Hundred*, its title taken from the name for the extreme right in pre-revolutionary Russia, presents a detailed historical account of the Russian far right from its emergence in the late 19th century to the present. The ideological continuity of the nationalist movements, past and present, is striking. In fact, there is little new about today's monarchists, neo-fascists or New Rightists.

Like the Black Hundred, the contemporary Russian right aspires to defend and advance the "Russian ideal"—namely, the belief that Russia is a historically chosen, spiritually unique, culturally blessed nation, superior to and wholly misunderstood by the secular, materialist West. The essence

of that anti-modern, anti-Western ideal is rooted in what Laqueur calls the "primordial darkness of the Russian soul." Conspiracy theories abound, with "world Jewry" one of the favorite scapegoats.

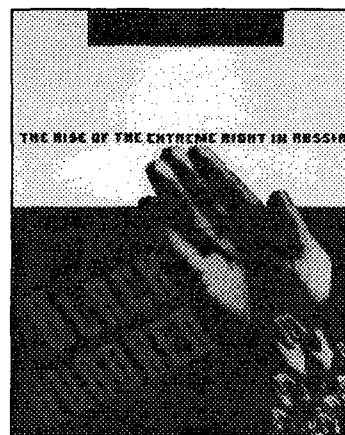
Those in the Russian right set little store in either parliamentary democracy or market economics. In their view, political pluralism inherently undermines the all-important goal of "Russian unity," which is better insured by a strong-arm nationalist leader in an autocratic state than by a fractious legislature. Capitalism is a Western, essentially Jewish-inspired system that creates artificial divisions within the nation and erodes the folkish ways of life that nationalists idealize.

In Russia, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, nationalism didn't simply lie dormant during the years of communism. After Stalin formulated his "socialism in one country" thesis in 1936, communist leaders, under the banner of "Soviet patriotism," called regularly upon traditional Russian nationalism to rally popular support. The official ideology of the Soviet Union developed into a form of national Bolshevism.

While communist ideology tolerated and fed off nationalism, "it could not coexist with the ideas of the democratic dissidents, because these undermined the very foundation of the regime," Laqueur astutely notes. And so critics like Andrei Sakharov were hounded, while extreme nationalists were left in peace.

When glasnost finally enabled the nationalist right to

break free of Marxist-Leninist ideology, the New Right emerged in a variety of guises, ranging from Cossack clubs (see story on page 26) to the virulently anti-Semitic Pamyat groups. Emerging from the crowd, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy founded the Liberal Democratic Party in late 1989. A nonentity until then, he has since made a name as an orator whose clowning, outrageous promises and terrible threats have drawn the media spotlight. He has promised the humbled Russians both law and order and a return to imperial glory. In his 1991 run for president, he received 6 million votes.



**Black Hundred:  
The Rise of the  
Extreme Right in Russia**  
By Walter Laqueur  
HarperCollins  
315 pp., \$27.50

As Laqueur sees it, Zhirinovskiy draws his support from the lower echelons of the state bureaucracy, from those who fear the loss of their stable, mildly privileged positions. Older people, too, have been likely prospects for Zhiri-

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novsky's backward-looking politics, for "while they were not ardent believers in Leninist ideology, they tended to prefer the certainties of a bygone period to the uncertainties of the Gorbachev and Yeltsin era." Better the stability of dictatorship than the chaos of multiparty democracy.

Today the Russian people have basically three political choices: the nationalist right, the old communists and the so-called "reformers." The latter, the only democratic option of the three (and I use the word "democratic" here loosely), has badly discredited itself and modern democracy as well by linking itself so intimately with painful market reforms. The conflation of democracy and market has left the field open for non-democratic alternatives with vague, pseudo-leftist economic demands. The right and the old left are already stronger than the democrats and, united in a red-brown coalition, could come to power should things continue along the present path.

The extreme right already plays an influential role in Russian politics. Zhirinovskiy's electoral triumph immediately prompted Yeltsin to play up his own rhetorical support of Russian minorities abroad and to slow the pace of economic reform. A nationalist, regional foreign policy—centered on the dream of a Greater Russia—now seems the one thing that all political factions agree upon. Although Zhirinovskiy

may only have provided Yeltsin with the excuse he needed to flex Russian muscle, his presence made it that much easier.

A nasty, extremist right has become an integral part of Russia's new political culture. The question now is whether it will grow to dominate the young processes of transformation. If it does, all of Europe will be paying much closer attention to events in the East. ▲

Paul Hockenos is the author of *Free to Hate: The Rise of the Right in Postcommunist Eastern Europe* (Routledge).

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By Carl Shapiro

Address delivered at the Thomas Paine National Historical Association, New Rochelle, N.Y., Annual Birthday Celebration, January 29, 1969

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the flaws of these older works are obvious: contrived plots, teary speeches, moral earnestness worn like a badge. But at the same time, these works evince a naive faith in the democratic ideal, in the ability of the average person to spot a wrong and then do something about it.

In shows like *NYPD Blue*, *Law & Order*, *Birdland* and *Homicide*, that urge to prick the conscience of the audience has been totally stripped away. What remains is the lurid thrill of a glimpse into the seamier side of life. We're treated to relentless nastiness, but we're never allowed to hope that something—anything—can be done about it. More ominously, it's never made clear *why* things are so bad; they just are, and that's that.

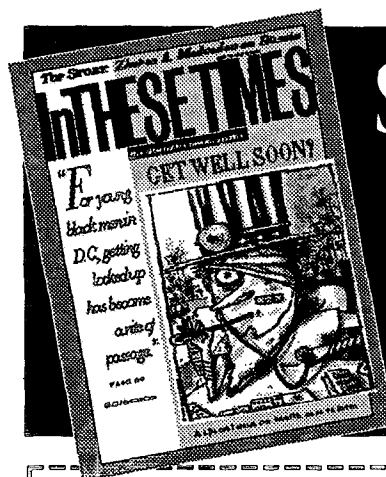
For earlier generations, child labor, squalid tenements and segregation must have seemed as fixed a part of the social landscape as drugs, impoverished schools and violent crime are today. Yet that did not stop people of goodwill from advocating a better world. Artists who did so—provided they mixed in a good dollop of sentiment and thrills—could reasonably expect to find a large audience. The new crime dramas, by contrast, celebrate cynicism; big-heartedness is as hopelessly out of date as a petticoat.

Anyone who would take such a dim view of the social contract would be a great candidate for the purely private pleasures of the consumer culture. The shows, for all their grimness, actually make an ideal setting for advertisers. Hell, if the world is such a lousy place, why not treat yourself to a new car—or an improved antiperspirant? Someone give me a cheeseburger, please.

Needless to say, anyone with any cash to speak of wouldn't be caught dead in the seedy settings of these shows. And here we arrive at the crux of the difference between the old and new social realisms. In the old movies and novels, the protagonists were the working poor, the discriminated-against black or Jew, the helpless immigrant, the unjustly convicted prisoner; in other words, those who suffered the most from a heartless society. Audience members were asked to sympathize with the downtrodden. TV's new realism turns that formula on its head. Now we're asked to identify with cops, doctors and lawyers—the professionals who keep a lid on the urban powder keg. All the protagonists are avatars of that oxymoronic group, the "forgotten middle class."

In truth, this group is about as forgettable as a hard right from Mike Tyson. And while we should feel some sympathy for a group that faces unprecedented insecurity as big business cuts jobs and government scales back spending on schools, hospitals and other vital services, the notion that the middle class has been blindsided by the locomotive of late-20th-century history is hilarious. Or would be, if it weren't put to us with a straight face by so many scheming pols, pundits and TV producers, all in the name of entertainment. ▲

Kent Miller is a freelance writer living in Seattle.



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I N THE END

# Delusions of Miranda

By Kent Miller

Television has grown up, and, like a lot of adults, has put on airs. Years ago, one could tune into *Starsky & Hutch* or *Mannix* and be assured of plenty of underdressed women, fast cars and explosions, unsullied by any higher aesthetic aspirations.

Now, instead of giving their viewers a quick testosterone rush, shows like *Law & Order*, *Birdland*, *Homicide* and, most notoriously, *NYPD Blue*, load us down with a familiar litany of urban woes: drugs, random violence, alcoholism, intractable bureaucracies, backstabbing and double-dealing. A mood of unremitting seriousness has taken over prime time. Some dare call it pretense.

All these shows trace their lineage to *Hill Street Blues*, the first big hit of *NYPD Blue* co-creator Steven Bochco. Jittery camerawork, snarling dialogue and peeling paint aim to assure us that we're getting a healthy dose of gritty realism. These shows slather on relevance like teenage aftershave, but their glowing reputations for cutting-edge drama dim somewhat when one realizes that the problems they depict aren't exactly hot news.

*NYPD Blue* is the most celebrated of these shows, largely because of Bochco's presence and because the Rev. Donald Wildmon raised a big stink about the show's bare butts before it even premiered. But other examples of the New



Meaningfulness abound. Steven J. Cannell's first big hit, the '70s staple *The Rockford Files*, was about a guy looking out for himself. His latest, *The Commish*, is about a guy looking out for disadvantaged others.

The ham-handed sincerity of the new shows obscures what humble pleasures they offer. In *Birdland*, Brian Dennehy plays the chief of psychiatry at a rundown inner-city hospital. Dennehy is one of the most charming men on the planet, but even Cary Grant would look ridiculous if he were called upon week after week to rescue troubled adolescents and defuse hostage crises. In *Law & Order*, phony truculence and touches of *Dragnet*-like faux-social realism hide the clever plotting, as zestful and improbable as anything cooked up by O. Henry.

More disturbingly, these shows have hijacked the honorable artistic tradition of social protest for the purpose of hawking consumer goods.

From Upton Sinclair's turn-of-the-century muckraking novel *The Jungle*, through pro-integrationist films like *The Defiant Ones* and TV shows like *East Side, West Side* in the '50s and '60s, the art of social protest has aimed to prick the audience's conscience by mixing tough-minded observation of the seamier side of life with a good dose of melodrama. To an age that likes to think itself wiser and more sophisticated,

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